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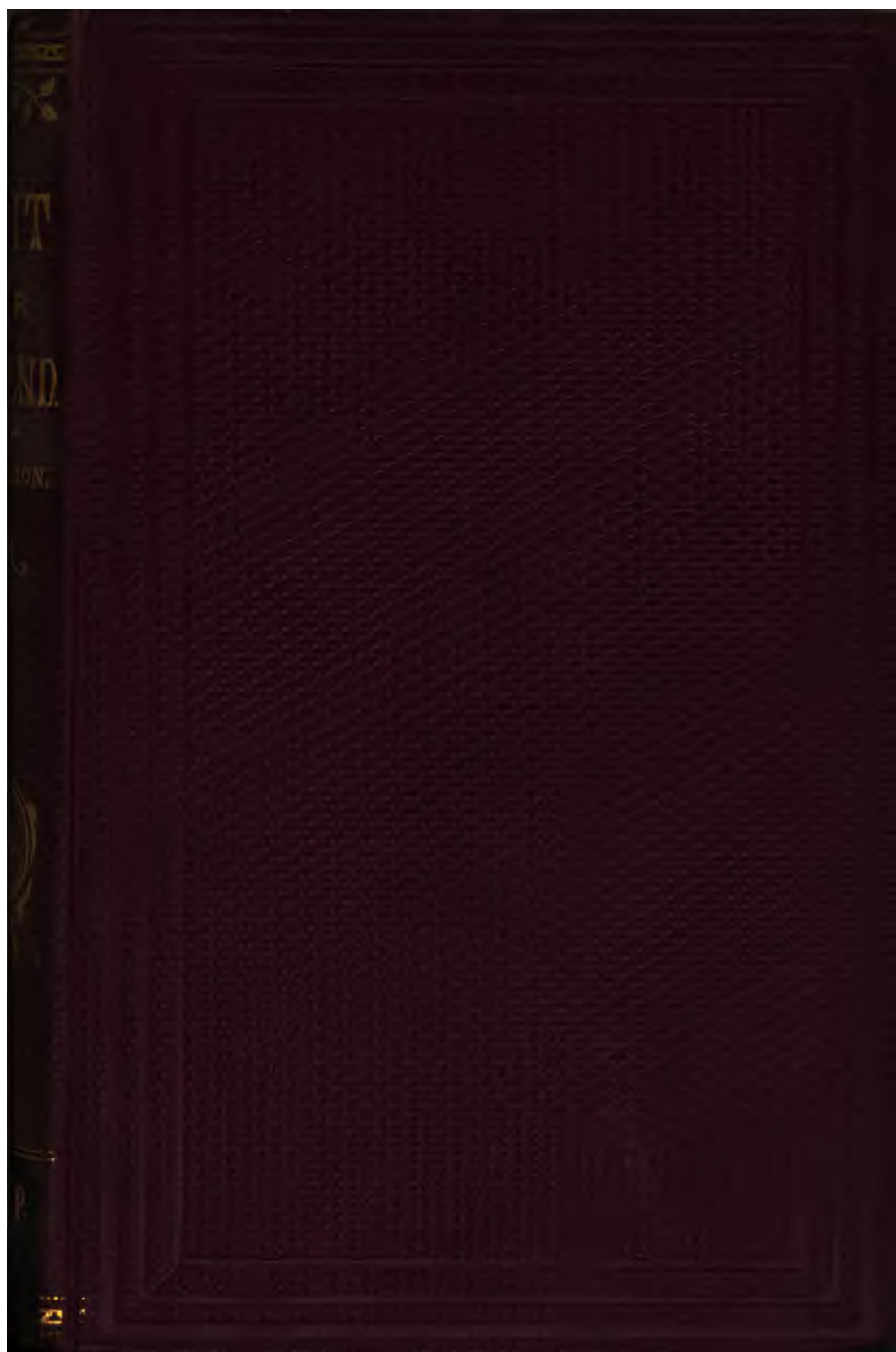
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WAIT FOR THE END.

A STORY.

BY

MARK LEMON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

BRADBURY AND EVANS, 11, BOUVERIE STREET.

1863.

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250. p. 71.

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.



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WAIT FOR THE END.

CHAPTER I.

OLD FRIENDS IN A NEW WORLD.

“Tum to tea, untle Jack, tum directly, minute,” cried a bright-eyed little girl standing in the doorway of a log-house on the borders of the Bathurst country. An old English mastiff, the terror of the native dingoes, lying basking in the sun beneath the verandah which ran round the house, merely wagged his tail in recognition of the speaker, but half rose up when a full manly voice came pealing across the stock-yard in reply, as though the old dog was watching for the coming of his beloved master. . None could doubt that the settlers were from England when they saw the neat garden filled with the prettiest flowers of the

country, interspersed here and there with a few English exotics, which appeared to be cherished tenderly. The house and out-buildings were all of unsawn timber, and the great stock-yard was surrounded by palisades of a regular height, but only trimmed by the axe. Far away stretched Bathurst Plains, with here and there great growths of forest trees, then brown with their summer foliage. Beautiful birds—but songless, alas!—flew about in the bright sunshine, whilst groups of parrots screamed at each other, hardly compensating by the brilliancy of their appearance for the horrible discord they created. The interior of the house was as cleanly and as orderly as any true Englishwoman's home is sure to be, and here and there were evidences of a better taste than is always to be found in the rude dwellings of the Bush. Four years ago the sole owner of this location had been George Warner; but he had taken to himself since then two partners, one for life, and the other a sharer in his toil and worldly gains, in the person of his brother-in-law, John Spraggatt. It was he who, in answer to his niece's summons,

now came from tending cows, and horses, and bullocks, in the stock-yard, and toward whom the old mastiff bounded the moment he knew his attentions would be acceptable. No one meeting Jack Spraggatt now, in Morden market-place, would have recognised the smart young farmer of former days. His beard had been allowed to grow, and showed a productive harvest. His shirt was of blue flannel, and his breeches of strong drab cloth, fastened round his waist with a leathern strap. His boots were of horse-hide, with the hair preserved on the outer side, and the spurs attached to his heels were odd ones, and none of the brightest. Before entering the house he made his way to an outbuilding, and there completed a satisfactory toilet by the aid of a tub of water and a clean jack-towel. His hair and beard he arranged by the aid of a mane-comb, which he carried in the pocket of his flannel shirt, and then entered the kitchen where the tea was awaiting him. As soon as he was seated, his little niece Florence mounted his knee, and received a kiss through that great shaggy beard, which

tickled her into laughter. Though Lucy—Mrs. Warner—was present at the table, its honours were performed by an elderly person who had held that position for the eight preceding years, ever since Warner had been in the colony, having come with him, old as she was, from her native England. She was called Nurse, and it was difficult to say who loved her most of that desert family. She did no household work now, but patched and mended when her old eyes would let her, and looked after the idol of the house, Florence, when Lucy was engaged in other domestic duties. Mr. Warner had gone down to the new town of Bathurst on business, and was not expected until late in the evening; so we shall have time to say something of him, and of what he has done since we parted with Gerard Norwold eight years ago, and when we learned that we should never hear of that dishonoured name again except in connection with the past.

George Warner had inherited all the good or evil pertaining to that banished son, and had

vowed that his father's home should never more be his, but that in this new land he would raise up a house that should outvie in honour and repute any that could be found in England, although title should be wanting. To achieve this, he did not hesitate to accept the assistance of his mother's friend, his devoted nurse ; so together they had come to this distant land, and had made a resting-place which God had blessed, until one poor exile's spirit wandered day and night back to his native land, and hovered round the dwellers at the Elms, growing bolder and bolder from the blessings which came every day, and at last it wrote down the earnest, passionate words to which Lucy had listened, and which made Jack Spraggatt part from all that bound him to the home of his fathers, so that he might bring two loving hearts together, and make all their lives happy for a time.

Lucy had not come undowered to her husband, and Jack had brought into the partnership not only money, but willing labour, and farming knowledge, and was one of the first in the colony

to discover that gold could be really gathered from the backs of sheep, though the breed did not come from Colchis. He had brought with him two of the choicest animals of his herds, and their produce had helped to enrich him beyond his expectations. It was he who had worked about the log-house, and laid out the garden to resemble in some degree the one at the Elms, though there was no yew hedge to bring back the remembrance of past sorrows. But there is to be no more a Paradise upon earth, and occasionally thoughts of the old time and a love of the old land would come back to all, and for a while sadden each in turn.

The barking of the dogs announced the return of Warner, and all were glad to see that he was accompanied by a young man, evidently a stranger to the Bush. There was no mistaking the military air of the new-comer, and none were surprised, therefore, to learn that Lieutenant Hamerton was stationed at Bathurst, and had come over, on leave, to stay a few days at Ararat, as the location was called.

"I have been fortunate enough to discover in this gentleman the one who was so kind to me on my arrival in the colony," said Warner. "Nurse, you recognise our friend in Lieutenant Ham-merton."

"Ah, bless me, yes!" replied Nurse; "we have spoken of you a hundred hundred times."

"I am sure you are very kind to remember such a small service," said the young man. "I assure you, madam," addressing Lucy, "I merely performed the commonest civility to a stranger."

"Not so," answered Warner. "You thought us poor and destitute of friends, and would have supplied both, my good fellow. Let me introduce you to my wife, who will be glad to entertain a civilised gentleman as long as his leisure or inclination will permit him to remain."

Lucy spoke a few earnest words in corroboration of her husband's invitation, and an ample supper was soon prepared. Jack had charged himself with the care of the horses, and having seen them carefully stabled and groomed by one of the men, joined the party. Of course the con-

versation went to the Old Country, and the young lieutenant did not hesitate to confess that he cared not how soon he returned home again.

"It is all very well for you, Warner, who are employed in making your fortune, to live in this desolate place; but I long, I confess, for the comforts and elegancies of a more advanced state of civilisation," said Hammerton.

"I can well understand," replied Warner, with a very small sigh, "that you miss much to which you have been so long accustomed that it has become necessary to your enjoyment of life; but we have projected our own future, and are happy and contented to work it out."

"For my part," said Jack, "I would not exchange our free and independent life in the Bush for all the shams of what is called society at home. One feels a sort of king in this new country, and only regrets that it is necessary to slaughter so many of one's subjects annually, even after shearing them."

"I can believe *you*, sir," replied Hammerton; "but when a fellow has nothing but his pay to

exist upon, and no prospects of increasing it, I would rather enjoy some of the privileges of my red coat, and take a little out of society."

Hammerton then recalled some of his pleasant experiences, and dined again with hospitable mayors, and danced once more with their pretty daughters, as he had done when his first uniform was untarnished.

Jack Spraggatt would have taken exception to much that Hammerton described as human felicity, but he was too considerate to say anything which might be distasteful to their guest; whilst Lucy was pleased with their young friend's good spirits and grateful remembrance of such small enjoyments as he had described.

"I think you and Mr. Warner are brave people," said Hammerton, quite omitting Jack, "to squat down here, and live as though you had been always used to such hard lives. I know you have not—I see it—and I hope you may never feel your life irksome. By Jove! I don't think any amount of gain would reconcile me to such an exile. I should look at little missee there,

sitting on papa's knee, and think what she might be in Old England, and what she must be in this wilderness. There she would have access to all the refinements and accomplishments which make a lady; here she will be obliged to vegetate into the wife of some colonist, like——"

"Me," said Jack, finding Hammerton's eye rest on him as he paused.

"Well, without offence, yes—and a very good husband you would make, no doubt, for a colonist," replied the lieutenant.

Lucy looked at her husband, and saw there was a shade upon his face as he gazed earnestly at little Florence. Perhaps she had seen it there before, as she rose instantly, saying, "Flory must go to bed now, it is long past bed-time; but she was promised to sit up for papa, and promises to little girls must not be broken." So, taking the child in her arms, she held its rosy lips to be kissed by the dreaming father, and to be tickled once more into laughter by Uncle Jack's big beard.

The conversation then turned upon the new discoveries made by Blaxworth, Wentworth, and

Lawson, and the future prospects of the colony, occasionally varied by some of Hammerton's experiences with the convicts, and the remarkable prosperity of some who had worked out their term of servitude, and become men of wealth and character.

The party retired to rest early, and in the morning Jack started before the others had assembled at breakfast to attend to their distant stations, where they had large flocks under the care of hired shepherds, so that Hammerton was left to Warner for entertainment and amusement.

Throughout the two succeeding days their conversation frequently reverted to the Old Country, and Hammerton produced an effect on Warner's mind which for awhile disturbed him, and required the exercise of a strong will to control, if not to subdue, altogether; and it was well, perhaps, that the regiment to which Hammerton was attached was ordered home before much further intercourse took place between them.

The order of recall came very unexpectedly, and would have placed Hammerton and a young

ensign in considerable pecuniary difficulty had not Warner proved his sense of the lieutenant's former kindness more substantially than by words. The time came when Warner was strangely reminded of this parting.

Lucy, with the eyes of love, had seen what was often present in her husband's mind, and, as Florence grew older, sought diligently to impart to her as much knowledge as she herself possessed ; but the child was self-willed, and being petted by every one, was induced only with great difficulty to apply herself to her studies. Her chief delight being in music, Uncle Jack, by the aid of his fiddle, made her acquainted with the rudiments of that delightful science, and then by degrees she learned to sing from notes, and added greatly to the few amusements of the home in the Bush.

Lucy met with an unexpected adversary to her watchful care and endeavours to ensure contentment to her husband, in no less a person than old Nurse. As she increased in years, her mind became enfeebled, and, like most old persons, she

would wander back into the past, and dwell upon the remembrances of her youth. She was never happier than when so employed, narrating to Florence stories of great people and grand doings, until the young girl began to contrast her own unvarying mode of life with the changeful and pleasurable existence of those whom Nurse had conjured up, as it were, like living things before her.

Lucy had often gently chided Nurse for this imprudence, but the forgetfulness or wilfulness of age made her a frequent transgressor. The consequences which Lucy foresaw, her brother Jack feared also, and at last their mutual anxiety led them to take counsel together frequently on a subject so deeply interesting to all.

As Lucy never encouraged Florence in a repetition of these recollections, she soon ceased to speak of them to her mother, but as she was continually the companion of her father in his rides about the location, she found in him a willing listener to the disguised legends of his own forsaken family, and much of his pleasant

life began to assume the restraint of exile, and the regret of a forfeited position.

Jack was one day surprised as he sat at the kitchen window, making artificial flies for his favourite sport of angling, to hear old Nurse describe—though without using names—the family story, and to find little Florence had been crying from sympathy with her own representative. Jack was very angry, and later in the day was remonstrating with Nurse, when Warner joined them. Jack freely told him what had occurred, and urged him to request Nurse to be silent upon such subjects for the future. The appeal came too late, the seed was sown and grew slowly, very slowly, in the lonely Bush; but it was destined to blossom and bear fruit in a more congenial place.

From that day Warner was a changed man. Not much changed either; and had he been less beloved, it is possible that the alteration in him would have been unobserved. But the love which had left home and kindred, and had regarded five thousand miles across the sea but as a day's

journey, to unite itself to another love which had come forth out of sorrow and injury, could not be deceived for a moment, and Lucy remembered her compact with her brother, and came to him to share her sorrow.

Poor Jack had a great, but not a quick head, and it required some days before he could devise a plan which appeared to meet all the difficulties of the case. He hit upon one at last, and it needed all his brotherly love to propose it for the consideration of Warner and his wife.

Warner had had one of the moody fits to which he was now frequently disposed, and had only recovered his usual good-humour when supper was over, and old Nurse had retired to bed. Lucy had given a slight preliminary yawn, indicating her bedward intentions, when Jack filled his pipe, and requested another glass of grog, having, he said, a matter of importance to speak about, and which he wished both of them to sleep upon before they gave him an answer.

Lucy's heart beat quickly, for she surmised that what Jack was about to say, had reference

to the subject they had so often discussed in secret.

"I have been thinking, George Warner," said Jack, "that the time is come when we ought to extend our business, or dissolve partnership." Jack would not observe the surprise this announcement occasioned, but giving two or three puffs at his pipe, he continued—

"Our flocks are numerous, our other stock flourishing and productive, but most of our profit goes to the middle-men at Bathurst and Sydney, and that, I think, ought to be avoided."

"What do you mean?" asked Warner, as Jack took a sip of grog, and then drew one long breath at his pipe, and blew the smoke in a wreath towards the ceiling.

"My meaning is very plain," continued Jack. "I have seen for some time that our darling Florence," a slight pause here, "is growing out of Lucy's teaching, and that you both are aware of that. Now I propose (puff), taking that into consideration (puff), as well as the great amount for commissions we pay to the brokers and others

(puff), that you, George Warner, should open a merchant's store either at Bathurst or Sydney (puff), and leave me to manage the location for the benefit of both." Jack puffed now so vehemently, that even his great bushy beard was lost in the clouds he emitted.

"Leave you here alone?" cried Lucy.

"Alone!" said Jack from his cloud.

"Oh, impossible!" said Warner. "Our life is dull enough as it is, but to live here alone—impossible."

"Not in the least," said Jack; "I shall prefer it. I want to see you and Lucy perfectly happy, and Florence (puff) properly educated, and that I have long seen can't be done here in the Bush. If you can persuade old Nurse to stay with me, so much the better for me and for Floey, and——." The smoke, or something else, got into his throat, and he coughed rather violently for a minute.

Lucy put her arms about his neck, and kissed him; and when she could speak, she said—

"Dear, dear brother, your clever plan will not do. Neither I nor my good husband would con-

sent to such a proposal. To leave you here lonely——”

“I’m never lonely now,” interrupted Jack ;
“and when my duties are increased a little, I shall not have time to think about myself. Now, go to bed, both of you. To-morrow is Sunday, so you can take an extra hour to talk it over ; and if you don’t come to my way of thinking, you don’t deserve to have the care of such an angel as God has given to your keeping. Good night ; and go along, and don’t leave out the grog bottle !”

Jack spoke so authoritatively, that there was nothing to do but to obey him, and he was soon left alone with his pipe, for which he felt a growing affection, believing, as he did, that parental love would overcome any scruples of Warner and Lucy, and that he should soon find himself like Alexander Selkirk, the monarch of all he surveyed.

He was quite right in his conjecture ; but he did not succeed to the throne of solitude until many fireside parliaments had been held, and

great firmness had been displayed upon his part. Old Nurse, strange to say, elected to remain in the Bush, fearing, as she told Jack, that if she should be taken where there were any old women to talk to, she should be disclosing the family secret, and so defeat an object for which such sacrifices had been made.

It necessarily required some time to make arrangements for the new state of things, and it was surprising what a deal of business Jack found for himself abroad. He was evidently schooling himself for the life which was before him, and seeking to accustom himself to absence from those whom he loved so dearly.

And this continued until within a few days of their departure, and then poor, simple heart! he seemed not to be able to bear Florence out of his sight. He played to her the old tunes upon his fiddle over and over again, making her sing to him the songs which she had learned by his rude teaching, and which she promised never to forget —no never! He gave her a rude drawing of the station, which he had made, and showed her upon

it where he should live and sleep, and asked her to look at it sometimes, and blow a kiss to Uncle Jack, which he was sure some good angel would bring safely to him in the Bush.

He was very merry, nevertheless, for he had calculated well all the consequences of their separation, and knew that to secure happiness to those for whom he was surrendering so much, he must not allow them to believe they had left behind them a sorrowful, because a lonely man.

When the drays and waggons which bore away those he held dearest in the world, had started for Bathurst, Jack ran to a little eminence which commanded the most distant point of the road, and stood there, waving his hat, until the last of the departing train could be seen, and then he threw himself upon the grass, and uttered words of prayer and thankfulness before returning to his own house, feeling, when he entered it, more desolate than he had ever done in his life before. His nearest neighbour lived some forty miles distant; and before Warner reached *his* home, twice that space would be between them. But they

should meet again very often ; for what were the eighty miles or more which would lie between them to such hardy bushmen as they had become. They would be with him again before a year had passed, and he would take a holiday when he could, and pay them a visit, to witness the happiness he had procured for them at some sacrifice of his own.

Old Nurse should now have a free use of her memory and her tongue, and he would live with her in the times that were gone, and with those who had had their joys and sorrows in them. And so it came to pass, and Jack sat a patient listener night after night, until he could repeat all the old stories word for word, although when Nurse was most fluent in speech and clearest in recollection, he would often let his thoughts wander miles and miles away, sometimes to the colonial town where Lucy, Florence, and Warner were ; and sometimes over the sea, to the graves in the churchyard, and to the homes of living friends, tarrying longer, perhaps, with one fair woman, whose presence would have filled all his heart and

lonely home, had it been decreed that their lives should have been passed together.

The Warners were faithful to their engagement, and came every year to pass a month at least with Uncle Jack, but not to listen to old Nurse's stories longer, for she soon passed away, and Jack laid her under the shadow of a large tree, but still where the setting sun could throw its parting rays upon the green turf which hid her dust. Faithfully had she discharged her trust, and a small marble stone bore testimony to her faithfulness, placed there by "her foster-son."

Matters prospered well at Bathurat with George Warner and Company; as time went on their names were known in the London markets, so that wealth came fast, so fast that the small colonial town was not large enough for its display, and the doting father thought of scenes more fitted to his child, of companions more worthy of her—station—yes, that was the word that ever and anon he heard in his waking dream.

CHAPTER II.

ANOTHER ACQUAINTANCE FROM THE OLD COUNTRY.

—JACK SPRAGGATT LEARNS MORE THAN HE THINKS FOR.

A BLUSTEROUS day in August was drawing to a close, and the distant plains and surrounding forest-trees looked cold and cheerless in their snowy covering, as Jack Spraggatt sat down to his lonely meal of tea and damper. Strange contrast to his early life, when it was a rare day that did not find some two or three friends at his hospitable board, and rarer still to have no familiar face to look upon,—no familiar voice to bid him welcome. The rude kitchen of his log-house would often fade before his eyes like pictures in a magic lantern, and change to the snug parlour of the Elms; and shadowy forms would glide about the room, and for awhile—a little while—supply the places of realities. And

then all would pass away again, and he realised the place he occupied in this new land, and almost wondered how he had come to have a part to play there, so far away from all which had made his early life. He often found most cheering answers from an approving conscience, which told him he had fulfilled at his own self-sacrifice a duty imposed upon him and sanctified by death, and that he had striven hard and successfully to leave his father's name as honoured in his own land as when it came into his keeping. It needed this approving voice, and something more, sometimes, to keep a good heart in the bosom of the lonely settler, and Jack never refused to welcome any comforter that came into his thoughts. "Lucy is happy, and Warner is happy, and my darling pet has the promise of a bright future, and I have helped them all a little," he would think. "And I am, or ought to be, without a care, so prosperous as we are at present. I have buried that hideous skeleton of debt, which made my life nothing but bitterness—thank God for that—never to rise again to haunt me and drive

me almost mad. It is somewhat lonely, I confess, but then I can command companions at my will, and read the thoughts of such immortal men as Shakespeare, dear Oliver Goldsmith, and Robbie Burns. Have I not the Warners' visits to look forward to? Though there is the parting also, when the house seems to have had a joy removed that may not come again. Pshaw! I must put such a thought as that in my pipe and blow it away in smoke. Now, Hephzibah, bring another log or two, lass, and let us have a good fire. Tell your husband to learn what the dogs are barking at, and mind that the two shepherds who came in to-day have good suppers and warm beds. Poor fellows! they've a rough time of it in the plains."

The cause of the dogs' barking was not an unusual one at that time in the colony. It was a convict who had obtained his ticket searching for employment, which was not to be had so readily now that the winter had set in. Jack had ordered the man into the house, and more wretchedness than was wrapped up in the rags and scraps of leather which composed the covering of the poor

fellow, it would have been difficult to have found, even in New South Wales. The snow still clung to his matted hair and beard, and fell from him in flakes, as he sought with his benumbed hands for the document which entitled him to be at liberty.

"Never mind your ticket, man," said Jack; "thaw yourself first, and then we will know more about you."

The man muttered his thanks, and almost crept into the burning logs piled up in the chimney of the outer kitchen, whilst the shepherds, themselves old convicts, eyed him with curiosity, as though expecting to discover a former comrade. The eagerness with which the fellow ate his food, told plainly enough that his fast had been a long one, as no word was spoken by him until he had satisfied his hunger, and then it was to utter the briefest thanks, as he produced his ticket. Neither of the shepherds could read, and as Jack was content to look at the pass at a distance, not caring who the poor devil was that had sought food and shelter at his house, the man remained as

much unknown as he was before the production of his papers, and appeared to be thankful when Jack ordered one of his shepherds to show him to his sleeping-place.

“If that wretched being could be paraded as he is, through every town in broad England,” thought Jack, “it might deter the hesitating thief from risking such a life, and perhaps frighten the boldest into a course of honesty. Transportation is only a word meaning a sea voyage and long absence to the prosperous rogue at home. Here it has other significations—bitter misery, deprivation, lingering death! Terrible expiation for violated laws which have been transgressed as often from ignorance as intention. It will be well if Society, that guards itself so carefully, can hold up a clean hand and say, ‘I have done my duty to these children of sin, and so claim a right to punish the offenders.’ It is a noisome task to dress the festering sore, but the good surgeon would try the experiment before he felt justified in amputating a limb. I fancy there is room enough in this colony to make half the future

thieves of England into decent men, if Society would send us the very young, and let us train them to be honest. Poor devils! born thieves, bred thieves, believing detection the worst thing in this life (and they know of no other), what can await them but the gallows, the prison, or transportation? And there's no one to blame for all this—only Society."

As Jack was not oppressed by any superfluity in that way, he may be excused for this long soliloquy, the more so as he knocked out the ashes from his pipe, and went off to bed and slept all the better for his odd thoughts and his good deeds.

The snow fell fast in the morning, and no man with a heart in his bosom would have turned a wild dingo abroad if it had sought shelter at his hands. How could Jack, therefore, dismiss the poor wretch who had come to him the night before, although he had no need for his labour? He bade him stay, and saw logs in an out-house, the interior of which could be seen from the kitchen window. As Jack sat opposite to it

eating a warm and substantial breakfast, the convict pursued his work ; but at intervals he would pause and press his hand upon his side and beat his breast as though to deaden pain.

"Bless my heart!" said Jack ; "the poor wretch may be ill, and we've set him to earn his breakfast of scraps at work that may be torture to him. A pretty sermonising humbug I am." So he rose, and, opening the window, called the man to come to him.

The convict made haste to obey the summons, and again involuntarily, it seemed, pressed his hand upon his side.

"Tell me, my man," said Jack, "are you in pain?"

"I am, sir," answered the man ; "in great pain."

"Then why the devil didn't you say so?" asked Jack.

The man shook his head to and fro mournfully, as he replied, "Ah, sir, for eight years I have had to bear pain both of mind and body, and know that I must continue to bear it without com-

plaining. I might have told you, though, had I given it a thought."

"Why me," asked Jack, "more than any one else about here?"

"Because Mr. John Spraggatt is not known to me now for the first time. I knew you in the Old Country," replied the convict.

"Knew me?" said Jack. "I have lost all recollection of you."

"No doubt, sir; and no wonder," replied the man; "for what I have undergone must have made me more like a beast than the man I was. O Lord! what I have suffered during the last twelve years! It will be only transportation, I used to think; *only* transportation! Better have swung twenty times, I have thought since I have been here."

"What is your name, man?" asked Jack, rather sharply.

"I have come many miles to see you, Mr. Spraggatt. I am Ray—the miller Ray, whom you knew at Morden."

Jack fairly staggered from the open window,

he was so shocked at the alteration in that wretched schemer.

Ray saw the action, and, shrugging his shoulders, said, hoarsely, "I don't wonder at your surprise, Mr. Spraggatt, if it is that which makes you recoil from me. If it is from remembering my offences, you must think that I have paid a terrible penalty for them."

"It was surprise, Ray—it was surprise," said Jack. "I have no reason to cast a stone at you."

"Perhaps not,—perhaps yes," replied Ray; "but I have come here to see you, and to die, I hope; for I think there is that at work within, which will set me free again."

"Come into the house," said Jack; "come in here, and let me hear what you have to say."

•

"First of all," said Jack, when Ray had seated himself, "what can I do to ease the pain you seem to suffer continually?"

"Nothing, I have been told—nothing, I hope; for I do not wish to live," replied Ray. "I

have been dying, I believe, for these eight months past; and I should not have made the long journey I have done, but hearing from a pal that you had settled here—your name is somewhat singular—I could not rest until I had seen if you were the same as I had known at Morden. It seemed that it would be like having a glimpse of home again.”

“And have you still the desire to return to England?” asked Jack, rather surprised that such a wretched creature should have any other wish than the one he had just expressed; namely, to die out of the world.

“Had I such a desire?” cried Ray. “It has been the one hope that has sustained me through all the dreadful sufferings of my convict life. I have dreamed of it waking and sleeping, and have been made very nearly mad when I have fancied it to be an impossibility. When I despaired of it at last, this gnawing, killing pain came; and I care not how soon its work is over.”

The man evidently spoke with difficulty, and Jack proposed that he should rest himself for an

hour or two; in the mean time some more decent clothing should be found, and then he would see what could be done for the future.

Ray merely said "Thank you, sir," and followed the person who had been called to show him to a room in the house, where he could comply with Jack's proposed arrangements.

When Ray had left, Jack threw himself into a chair, and stretching out his legs to their full length, commenced an earnest investigation of the fire—that wondrous camera, more wonderful than the conjuror's boasted crystal, and wherein may be seen the mouldering relics of times gone by grow into life again among the glowing embers.

The business transaction at the mill, and the burglars' visit, Gerard's disgrace and the burning of the great house, all came back to him; and he could not help a presentiment that much of the perplexity of the past was about to be removed by the death-stricken convict beneath his roof. Under this conviction he became very restless, going to and fro between

the stock-yard and the house, almost regretting the sleep permitted to the wretched man who could reveal so much which affected his dearest friend, George Warner.

Ray was greatly benefited in appearance when he again entered the kitchen, where Jack awaited him, and very few words passed between them before Ray became absorbed in deep reflection, as though uncertain how he should commence to unburthen himself of the "perilous stuff" by which he was oppressed.

"I have sought you out—" he said at last—"I have sought you out as much for my own sake as for that of others, whom I never intentionally injured, but who have suffered very grievously from my silence, when a word or two from me would have made justice a little more evenhanded. I did speak once under a promise which has been shamefully broken to me. It matters little now when the journey's so nearly over."

Ray then ran over so much of his early life as we already know, and do not care to hear

again, and until his appearance at Morden, as tenant of the mill.

"At that time I had resolved," he said, "to live an honest life, having been bred a miller; but temptation came in my way, and I could not resist the prospects of easier gains to be obtained by a confederacy with other rogues."

"How came you to select Morden for your residence?" asked Jack.

"Jasper's wife is, or was—for sometimes I think her dead—my only sister; and when she left London to live at Morden, I could not rest away from her, for she was the only one that ever loved me in the wide world, except my poor mother. Bless you, Barbara, dead or living!"

He paused for a moment or two and then went on.

"Jasper married her for the money she had, not caring how it had been obtained, or from whom. He was always a lucky man, and matters thrived with him. He lent me money to carry on my business as 'receiver,' taking a large

share of my gains, I need not say. He suspected, I fancy, that all was not honestly come by, but he kept a quiet conscience by asking no questions. That he thought I was playing a dangerous game I am satisfied, for one day he proposed that I should execute a deed giving him power of sale over all I possessed. I consented conditionally."

Ray paused, and a smile passed over his face, and his eye twinkled for a moment at some pleasing recollection.

"Well, you know all that happened; how he claimed priority of the Government, and succeeded in obtaining possession, although at that time I did not owe him a farthing, having repaid all which he had lent me. Now comes one of my great grievances. Before I was sent to the hulks, I had an interview with Jasper Jellifer, and it was arranged—solemnly arranged, that Jasper should transmit to me, whenever I required it, the money due to me under that bill of sale. As soon as I obtained my ticket—three years ago—I wrote home to Jasper; but

after waiting many weary months, no answer came. I wrote again to Barbara, and as yet no answer. I can't believe that Jasper would play me false, or that my sister, if she be living, would allow him to do so; and I have sought you out, Mr. Spraggatt, to learn if you know anything about my relatives?"

Jack was sadly disappointed at this termination of Ray's communication, and therefore he briefly replied by telling him of his last visit to the mill, when he thought he had found Jasper with the Bow-street runner Higgle.

"Higgle!" cried Ray, "Curse me if I have not thought that possible, often—very often."

"What do you mean?" asked Jack.

"That Higgle was put up to much that he knew by some close friend of mine, and it might have been Jasper! If I were sure of that!"

Ray paused, and a dark shadow overspread his face, dark as the black thoughts in his mind. Jack cared little for this roguish conspiracy, if there had been one, his whole desire was to learn what Ray knew of the story of the bracelet.

"Ah!" said Ray, "I am glad I made a clean breast of that matter before I was lagged, although Sir John has not acted fairly by me."

"How so?" asked Jack.

"It was a bargain between us, that he should use his influence with the big wigs at home and out here to get me some respite from my convict labour; but when he had learned my secret, he dropped me altogether."

"Sir John died before you were sent away," said Jack, "the day after his interview with you at Newgate."

"What!" cried Ray, starting up. "Died! I remember well that when I had told him that Gilbert, and not Gerard, was the thief, he left my cell suddenly, and—died the next day! Good Lord! perhaps I killed him."

Jack had risen also, and, seizing Ray's arm with the grip of a vice, said: "Gilbert, and not Gerard, was the thief! and this you proved to Sir John."

"Yes," answered Ray.

"I see it all," cried Jack. "The old father's heart broke when he knew the injustice he had

done to the noblest, best of sons. And did Jasper know of this?"

"Yes," replied Ray.

"The old scoundrel!" exclaimed Jack, quite beside himself with rage. "I'll go back to England, drag him into the market place and make him declare the truth upon his knees! Why was he silent?"

"Because he thought it his interest to be so. Jasper only knew the truth from me, and after the mischief had been done. You do intend to go to the Old Country again, then, some day?" asked Ray.

"Well, perhaps," replied Jack.

Ray paused, and then said abruptly, "Are you certain it was Higgler that you found with Jasper at the mill?"

"Nearly so," replied Jack. "Why do you ask?"

"Because I could never guess how he got so closely on my track, unless—unless Jasper Jellifer betrayed me. No, I won't believe that either—for Barbara's sake, I won't believe that."

Ray was evidently much moved, and walked up and down the long room some moments before he could continue to speak.

"Do you remember the night I bought your wheat, and the night after your sister's wedding?" asked Ray.

"Distinctly," replied Jack, "and that a burglary was attempted on each occasion. You kept watch the last time. I could swear it now."

"Quite right, sir, I am sorry to say; and on that occasion Jasper put the thought into my head by wondering some one did not attempt such a robbery. Higglers was put up to both the jobs, and would have grabbed me for them had we been successful. He told me so—and who told him, I wonder?"

Both Jack and Ray ceased speaking, each busied with the thoughts which this retrospect had awakened; and both continued silent until Ray was seized with an acute attack of pain, and, begging to be taken to his resting-place, the two shepherds were called, and assisted him from the room.

Jack was glad to be left alone, being perplexed as to the course he was to pursue. It was easy to take horse to Bathurst and communicate all he had heard to Warner, but what good was to come of that? Ray might not care to repeat what he had said, if he conjectured that it could be used to the disadvantage of his sister, for whom he had expressed such strong affection, even in his present degraded position; and it might therefore only reopen a wound in Warner's heart, which it was to be hoped had healed long ago. And yet, Sir John had known the truth before he died, and the knowledge of that circumstance would necessarily be a satisfaction to the injured son. So Jack resolved to find some business in the morning to take him to Bathurst, when he would seek an opportunity of communicating what he had learned to his sister Lucy.

The snow fortunately had ceased to fall, and a sharp frost succeeding, Jack resolved to make tracks for Bathurst, giving orders to his household that Ray should be cared for and left to his own discretion.

Jack was always a welcome visitor at Bathurst, and more so, if possible, when he came unexpectedly; and he was never so happy as when his darling Florence was by his side, combing his rough hair or singing one of the songs he had taught her in the Bush, or playing in the clumsiest way imaginable upon the only piano known to exist at that time in Bathurst. He had hitherto found no opportunity of speaking to Lucy alone, and when he looked upon the happy group of husband, wife, and child assembled in their pleasant home, he feared he might prove the serpent that was destined by his fatal gift of increased knowledge to destroy their paradise. However, he had come nearly one hundred miles to tell Lucy his story, and he could not return with it unsaid. So one day, when Warner was to be absent from morning till evening, Jack repeated all that Ray had told him, leaving her to determine what course should be pursued.

Lucy was greatly affected at her brother's communication, and her reasons for being so were wifelike enough. Hitherto, they had lived

peacefully and contentedly in the rough, young colony, desiring no other distinction than what their own character and success procured for them, and Warner appeared to have forgotten almost that he had had an ancestry or could have claimed to be its head, had he not fore-sworn of his own free will its advantages for ever. Might not this tale make the past appear less dreadful? Might it not revive desires which yet slumbered in her husband's breast, although long thought to be dead ashes, making him regret the position he had abandoned and stimulating him to regain it?

Her course of duty, however, was clear as light. Whatever the consequence, Ray's story must be told to her husband, and the result be left to that Providence which had never failed her hitherto.

When Jack returned to his home in the Bush he found his convict guest much weakened by an increase of pain, which received but slight mitigation from the sedatives which he had considerably brought from Bathurst, where he had had the opportunity of consulting a surgeon.

Ray had been writing a great deal during Jack's absence, and usually destroying one day what he had written the day before. He said this, and declared it to be consequent on what he had heard concerning Jasper's apparent intimacy with Higglar, and which had disturbed him greatly.

"It is a dreadful thought, Mr. Spraggatt," he said, "to have on your mind, that all I have suffered should have come from the treachery of the man I did trust with my life."

"I might have been mistaken," replied Jack ; "I only saw the person I thought to be Higglar for a moment."

"You only saw me for a moment in the moonlight, and yet you knew your man, Mr. Spraggatt," said Ray. "I wish I had never had these doubts of Jasper, but the more I think of the past, the more I suspect that he has sold me, or why no answer to my letters?"

"They, or the answers, may have miscarried," observed Jack.

"Yes, they may, and Jasper shall have the benefit of the doubt ; but if he be not a true man,

I may reach him in England from my grave, here in the Bush."

The business of the location called Jack abroad for some time, and when he returned, Ray had written over several sheets of paper which he had divided into two packets bound about with string, and fastened with knots. One was addressed

"No. 1. Jasper Jellifer,
England.

Which I shall never see again, R. R."

The other packet was superscribed, "If Jasper Jellifer, on the receipt of the packet addressed to him and numbered '1,' hands to you £200 for your care and kindness to me in this time of great suffering and death, then this packet No. 2, is to be delivered to him also. Should he not comply with my rightful demand upon him, then this packet is to be opened by you, Mr. John Spraggatt, or by any one whom you may appoint."

"Keep these packets apart, sir," said Ray, "and should you ever return to the Old Country, honestly try what No. 1 will produce. If he does not do what I have requested, open No. 2."

Jack believed there was as little chance of one event occurring as the other, when he locked up those packets in his *bureau*, nor thought for one moment how the living and the dead would be brought again together by the conjurations written therein.

The disease which was at war with Ray's life marched on slowly, silently, and surely to its ultimate conquest, and the quietude of the sufferer's present existence made him more sensible of the approaches of his grim enemy.

How lightly had he spoken and thought of death when engaged in the whirl of pleasure, or in his struggles with the mad misery of his suffering consequent upon his life of crime! But now, when subjected to no exciting condition, except physical pain, and left in the great solitudes which surrounded him, to commune with his guilty self, how terrible appeared the conqueror who was to lead him captive into the realms of the unknown future. His early years had not been without some religious training, and as it has been justly said :—

"Man is a religious being. He is everywhere a worshipper. In every age and country, and in every stage, from the highest intellectual culture to the darkest stupidity, he bows with homage to a superior Being ; be it the rude-carved idol of his own fabrication, or the unseen divinity that stirs within him, it is still the object of his adoration."

Ray was no exception to this teaching, and he began to be anxious concerning that future which he felt to be as true as the light and darkness of every day, and the growth and the decay of every season.

Jack Spraggatt was a simple, earnest man, who had received the divine truth as a little child, and his faith had grown with time and all the changes brought by it ; and so he strove to be a teacher and a comforter to the miserable man who had sought him out, to lay bare his miseries before him.

"Your last resting-place on earth is to be here," Jack said one day when Ray had suffered greatly in mind and body, "and death ought to be made welcome. It should be regarded as the angel

which releases our souls from the trammels of mortality, and opens the gates of a world where peace is eternal."

The struggle was long and difficult before Ray would acknowledge the truth of Jack's simple teaching, but conviction came at last, and when most needed.

It was Christmas-day, and the heat within doors was stifling and most oppressive, especially to the dying man, therefore Jack had had a couch carried out under the verandah. Ray had remained some time without speaking to the boy who had been appointed to attend upon him, and his breathing became more difficult every minute. At last he started up and with great effort requested that Mr. Spraggatt might be brought to him. Jack was sitting under the shade of the gum-tree which grew by old Nurse's grave, and anticipating that Ray's dying hour had come, instantly joined the sufferer.

"All is over, sir,—but I could not pass away without thanking you—that I die in peace." Ray had spoken with great difficulty, and a fit

of coughing which succeeded, left him much exhausted.

"Those papers," he gasped at length—"I gave you—destroy"—he could say no more.

"I understand all you desire, and if I return to England, will endeavour to fulfil your wishes." Jack addressed a deaf ear, for Ray was dead. In the time to come Jack remembered all that had passed at this closing scene, and believed that the last words of the dying convict had had a better meaning than the construction which he had then given to them.

Jasper Jellifer, far away over the sea, in England, kept that Christmas morning in his counting-house (he had grown to be a thriving man, and finding Morden too small a place for his money-making ability, had settled himself in London) and there he counted his gains, and no windfall had prospered better or borne goodlier fruit than the produce of the goods and chattels and other effects of Raymond Ray, the convict miller then dying in New South Wales.

Jack Spraggatt had returned to the Bush some

days before Lucy had had an opportunity of speaking to her husband on the subject uppermost in her mind, as Warner had requested her never to allude to the past, unless at times when he himself reverted to it, and for a while she hesitated to disobey his injunction. Warner was greatly excited when Lucy told him the revelation made by Ray, and he uttered words of thankfulness on hearing that his father had been made cognisant of his innocence of the cruel charge which had driven him forth a wanderer. Again and again he asked Lucy to repeat the story which he connected with the account Jack had given him of his father's death-bed, and his anger against Gilbert and Lady Norwold, whom he presumed to have been acquainted with her son's iniquity, broke forth in more violent expressions than Lucy had ever heard from his lips before, and he more than once regretted the solemn vow he had taken to forego his claim to the inheritance and title of his ancestors.

Lucy avoided remonstrance, trusting that time and reflection would restore that contentment

which had hitherto made their lives so peaceful and so happy. She thought that her expectation had been realised after a few days, and then she ventured to say, "Dear husband, have not our lives been such as we should choose to live again, if we had the power to recal the years which are gone? What have we to regret? Honoured as you are by all who know you, beloved by those who know you best, what more could inherited wealth bestow than that which you have achieved for yourself."

"True! true, my dear Lucy," he replied. "There is nothing to regret in what I have abandoned. A new name in a new world is better than an inheritance tainted as it would ever have been in the old, for men are prone to remember evil of each other, and

'Calumny
Will sear Virtue itself.' "

Gladly would she have believed that that conviction was ever in his thoughts; but a love so complete as her own was far too watchful not to discover the slightest indication of any disturbing

influence, and Lucy found many. They were only like passing clouds, but they served to cast a shadow upon the stream, although for a single minute. When Jack first told him of the destruction of Norwold Hall, Warner appeared to be gratified that the scene of his disgrace should have perished ; but now, he spoke of the loss of the old place regretfully, as though he had latent hopes which might have found realisation in the home of his fathers, had the fire spared it. Sometimes, when they were alone, he would speak of what his daughter might become, could she take her place with her own lineage, until Lucy almost feared that he would in time repent that he had wedded her, so lowly born compared to the one he would have selected had he been less unhappy. Then came the remembrance of all their married life, when love was everywhere, and she reproached herself for allowing such an unworthy thought to have possession of her mind for a moment.

CHAPTER III.

UNCLE JACK HAS HIS OWN WAY AGAIN.

FLORENCE was now seventeen, and her character beginning to develope its tendencies to good and evil. She had much of her mother's firmness and gentleness, marred by a waywardness which sometimes became unamiable. Like most over-indulged children, she appeared occasionally to be deficient in affection to those who had claim to her most devoted love, and would rarely confess to the wilfulness which her own reflection generally condemned. There were none to censure her—neither father, mother, nor Uncle Jack,—for to all she was ever the most faultless being in the wide world. Had she claimed the place which her father at times regretted she had lost, she could not have been more commanding, or more readily obeyed, than as the daughter of the colonist, George Warner. Poor child! she was

not to blame for the infirmities of her character, petted and caressed as she had been. There was a little dross among the gold which the fire of adversity might some day refine away.

It was not surprising that Warner should have occasional discontents, the offspring of his early training and associations, and he had been brave indeed to set them aside as he had done, until the provocation to their indulgence became very strong.

Florence one day ran into the room where Warner and Lucy were sitting, holding in her hand a newspaper from England, the possession of which she had secured by intercepting the clerk on his way from the counting-house.

"Look, mamma," said Florence, seating herself on her mother's footstool, and spreading out the English newspaper on her lap. "Here is a story so like the one old Nurse used to tell me frequently, that I should not wonder if the persons are not the same, for she never could remember their names. It is called the 'Court of Chancery before the Lord Chancellor, *in re*

Norwold,' whatever that means. . 'This was an application by Gilbert Norwold, Esq., of Norwold Hall, in the county of —, to be permitted to assume the title and entailed estates of his late father, Sir John Norwold. It appeared by the affidavits put in, that Gerard, the elder son of Sir John, shortly before his father's death, twenty-two years ago, was discarded by him for some cause not set forth, and that no tidings of Gerard had been obtainable from that time until the present, although diligent search and inquiries had been made in England and elsewhere. At the time of the said Gerard's departure, a coat and waistcoat, known to be his, were found on the banks of the river' (just as they were in Nurse's story,) 'and were thought to have been placed there in order to mislead the friends of the fugitive. It is now assumed that the said Gerard committed suicide, and that his body was carried out to sea.' In Nurse's story, the young man, you know, went abroad, and was married to a beautiful lady, and had a lovely little daughter. Do you think, papa, they could have been the

same persons?" but Florence found that her father had left the room, and that her mother's face was pale, and that she was greatly moved.

"Papa gone? What is the matter, mamma? You are not well, dear!" said Florence, rising and placing her arms round her mother's neck.

"I shall be better, love, in a few moments; the weather has been so warm; and—please fetch me the smelling salts from my bed-room."

Florence hastened to obey her mother's request, and Lucy hastily seized the newspaper and read rapidly all that Florence had been reading. It was true! Gilbert Norwold was seeking his brother's birthright. Not waiting the return of Florence, Lucy hastened in search of her husband, and found him in his own room at the counting-house, reading the report in one of the other London papers, and, as she expected, greatly agitated by the knowledge of his brother's proceedings.

"The hardened villain!" exclaimed Warner; "with the knowledge of the wrong he has done me, he has dared to seek the reward of

his infamy by supplanting me in my birthright. How knows he that I am not biding my own time to claim my rights, or that I may have children whom his perfidy has not reached? He has not repented of his sin against me, or he would have avoided rather than have sought to bear a title which must always remind him of his crimes."

"It is always difficult for me, dear husband," said Lucy, "to speak to you upon this subject, remembering as I do, that by your love I have been raised up, whilst you, by what has passed, have been driven from your higher place, and that must be hard to bear."

"No Lucy, no. It was not hard to bear until now that I know my dishonourable brother has sought to reap advantage from his damnable treachery!" exclaimed Warner.

"That has only made endurance more difficult, dear husband," replied Lucy, placing her arms around his neck; "for I have seen, dear, again and again, that old feelings, old expectations, old ambitions, come back to you when you thought

none could guess the cause of the clouded brow and the heaving bosom, and the fixed eye that was looking back into the past when you bore another name, not more honourable than the one you have made honoured ; but still it was yours by birthright, a legacy from a noble ancestry."

"Well."

"What prevents you claiming again that which you regret so much to have abandoned ?" asked Lucy, calmly.

"Lucy!" cried Warner, looking at her with surprise; "you, also, wish to have your true place in the world? You wish me to claim my own?"

"Your words seem to upbraid me, dear husband, because I would have you consult your happiness, not mine. What should I gain by the exchange? Nothing, for hitherto I have been a most happy wife, a most happy mother. The yeoman's daughter would not be so regarded as to have her happiness increased. With you it might be otherwise. You might realise some of the bright dreams of your youth,

you might take your place among your equals, and add new lustre to a name known already in the annals of our country. Take counsel with yourself, and if you decide that duty requires you to press your claims to distinction, or if you believe that your life would be made happier by the change, be resolute, and do at once what you elect to be the better for your peace."

"And do you counsel this, Lucy?" asked Warner.

"I counsel only contentment."

"And you, should I resolve upon this change—are you prepared to give up all which has hitherto made the happiness of your life?" he asked.

"All!" replied Lucy, and kissing his forehead fondly, she left him to his own reflections.

They did not meet again until supper-time, and then Florence resumed the subject which had been occupying her mind all the evening.

"Do you think, papa, those are the people old Nurse spoke of? And if so, will the elder son not claim his title and fortune?" asked Florence.

"I think not," replied Warner, in a calm,

grave voice. "Nurse did not tell you all. Nurse did not tell you that once upon a time, when the devoted wife believed that her husband regretted his lost position, that regardful only of her husband's happiness, she urged him to regain what he had so long abandoned, although she believed, and truly, that those who would then have been her husband's friends would have looked upon her coldly, perhaps contemptuously, as an intruder amongst them, and that her place might have been apart from his, for whom she had left home and kindred, and shared the privations of a struggling man. Self-sacrificing, truly loving, she forgot all that pertained to her own future in her regard for him and his unsettled fancies. And it was not until he saw all this, and reflected how they had hitherto made their two lives one, hoping, loving, sorrowing, and rejoicing always together, that he crushed out the last spark of those old remembrances which might have been fanned into a flame, and burned out the record of an oath solemnly sworn and hitherto faithfully fulfilled."

Florence noted not the love that was in her

mother's face, or the tears which flowed from her mother's eyes, but said—

“You are a very naughty papa to defend such folly. I am sure if I were the young girl, I would never forgive those who prevented me being a lady.”

Miss Floey then went to her piano, and played away with more emphasis than was consistent with proper expression. Possibly her energetic fingering proceeded from inefficiency, possibly from a little ill-temper.

Uncle Jack had been expected to make one of the family party on Christmas-day, but he was, as we know, away in the Bush, keeping Christmas like a Christian man, by the side of a dying sinner. The Warners were disturbed at his absence, the more so, as there had been one of those terrible droughts which, at intervals, visit New South Wales, decimating the flocks and herds of the settlers; and it was feared that Jack was detained by home anxieties. Warner had disposed of his share in the location to his brother-in-law, and the loss would, therefore, have to be borne solely

by Jack. Warner sincerely wished it had been otherwise, as he had done so much to increase the value of the property, that it seemed ungrateful to sell him a loss; but he found when Jack arrived that he had taken his disasters very easily, and looked forward to the next year to compensate him, repudiating, with a hearty laugh, Warner's offer to bear a share in his ill-fortune.

"Not a shilling, my dear boy, not a shilling," cried Jack. "Next year I will have the stock-book as full as ever. Next year I have two or three new experiments to carry out that will astonish, not only the natives, but surprise the 'cutest of settlers. Next year I shall build a new location, with some European improvements, which have become necessary since Floey has grown a young lady, and prefers a piano to Uncle Jack's old fiddle, when she comes to visit him."

And so the next year was to bring many changes, and one or two that Mr. Spraggatt did not contemplate when enumerating his own projects.

There were letters from Madame Letty, sister

Letty, who married Mons. Fichard. They usually came twice a year, and were always welcome, seeming to bring with them a breath from the Old Country. Her husband had been fairly prosperous; and though she was childless, her married life had been pleasant enough.

"Mons. Fichard had," she said, "been not in the best of health of late, and had resolved, therefore, to return to his native Paris, where he had a manufactory, and be content with an agent in London."

Letty was very pleased with this arrangement, as she had spent a month or two every year in that gay city, and coveted its pleasures. All this is small news, but "trifles make the sum of human things;" and Letty's contributions were destined to produce greater results than she had contemplated when inditing them. Aunt Letty was a great favourite with Florence, who often expressed her wish to know her, and to hear from her own lips about the gay balls, the plays and operas, accounts of which usually occupied some pages of her long epistles. These letters Floey

would carry to her own room, and read over carefully, contrasting their vivid descriptions of Letty's amusements with the humdrum existence she led at Bathurst.

Thus, as small birds carry little seeds from which grow great plants, Aunt Letty's letters implanted desires and fancies which cast a shadow for awhile over more lives than one.

The postscript of one of Madame Letty's communications contained her new address in Paris, and concluded with these memorable words:—

“And, oh! my dear Lucy, if I could only see you, and your dear husband, or my darling little niece, whom I love so much, or dear, old Jack, whom I love more than all of you, in my *maison*, I should be *so, so* happy.”

Florence loved her aunt more than ever.

Florence rarely spoke with her mother, though loving her very dearly, of her girlish interest in these pleasant descriptions of Aunt Letty, as their conversation generally terminated in a little maternal sermonising, which was not always agreeable to the young lady. With her father it was

otherwise. He listened to her "pretty prattle" with a smile, and would often entertain her by recitals of his own early experiences; until Florence wondered how he could have abandoned such pleasant society for a lonely home in the Bush, or the little less dreary residence in the money-grubbing town of Bathurst.

But Uncle Jack was even a better listener than papa, as he not only had recollections of similar events, but sometimes spoke as though a time might possibly come when the Old Country should be revisited again, and all the fairy tales they had told to each other be realised. Had the postscript to Aunt Letty's letter put that into Uncle Jack's head? and into Warner's also? for as the three elder people sat together one night, after Florence had gone to bed, the conversation turned upon it.

"I almost wish it were possible——" said Warner, thoughtfully.

Lucy and Jack awaited elucidation.

"I mean, that I wish it were possible for Florence to have for a short time, and when she

is of an age to profit by it, the opportunity of better studies and better society than she can have here."

Lucy thought that the old story contest was about to be resumed, and shook her head reprovingly, smiling as she did so.

"No! no!" said Warner, understanding her meaning. "Never more, I have said that. Nevertheless, as I do not promise to spend all my life in the colony, I should wish Florence to be equal to any European society we may choose to cultivate."

Poor Lucy's heart sank within her, and she looked towards Jack for comfort. None came, however, for he said——

"I have thought the same, Warner, very often, and could never see my way to the accomplishment of such a desirable state of things." Lucy's spirits revived, only to be more cruelly depressed, as Jack added—"until now."

"Good gracious, brother," Lucy always called him brother when he was a little out of favour. "You must be mad to think of such a possibility."

"Nay, nay," said Warner; "let us hear what he has to suggest. Hermits, like Jack, have bright revelations made to them, and more time for reflection than we busy town-folk. Florence is now rather more than seventeen, and a voyage to Europe would bring her nearly to eighteen. She is a clever girl, and would know how to profit by example and instruction. Letty has expressed a wish to see us——"

"Letty," cried Lucy, colouring deeply, "Letty is a kind, loving woman; but surely you would not infer that she is a better instructress than myself?"

"Of course not," replied Jack, taking a long pull at his pipe. "Not *herself*; but living as she does now in the most refined city in the world, she could procure the best masters and mistresses, and so have Florence instructed."

Lucy, like most other mothers on similar occasions, declared that she would not hear of such a proposal; and Warner, like most married men under like circumstances, entreated her to talk calmly over the matter, as he had had thoughts in the same direction.

"Your sister," he said, "is in a good position, we know something of her husband's family, and if she would undertake the charge of Florence, it might—mind, I only say it might—be desirable to let the child have the advantage that Jack hints at."

Jack had done more than hint; and if ever Lucy had felt a real anger against her brother, it was at that moment.

"I really cannot consent even to discuss such an absurd, such a cruel suggestion. Florence is neither ignorant, nor ill-mannered; and for the station she is *now* expected to occupy, will be accomplished enough. Pray, say no more."

"Very well," replied Jack.

"Indeed," continued Lucy, in spite of her own injunction to silence—women rarely know when it is dangerous to pursue a defeated enemy,—
"indeed, if such an arrangement were desirable, how could she be sent to Europe? Not alone, surely? I am the only person who could be sent with her, if you thought me sufficient protection on such a voyage."

"True," replied Warner; "I had never thought of that!"

"Nor I," said Jack, again adding—"until now."

"Very well. Then such being the case, it is useless to continue the subject."

Lucy could not help it. "I should be glad, very glad, if Florence could have the advantage of better teachers than I am. It might possibly be agreeable to her in after life, especially should papa determine to return to England; but women of moderate acquirements are generally equal to the occasion, and rise with their position, and I have no doubt but Florence would do the same.

Jack puffed away at his pipe, and Warner stirred his grog, allowing Lucy time to regain her usual composure.

Jack saw that she had accomplished what to her was not a very difficult matter, and he then ventured to say:

"My dear Lucy, as you seem to have acknowledged that what I suggested was rather desirable than otherwise had it been possible of accomplish-

ment, you don't think me mad, and are not angry with me?"

"No, you dear old goose," replied his sister—"not now, but I own you did vex me at first. You men are so inconsiderate where women are concerned, and you would have shipped poor Floey off like a bale of wool, and put her down in an invoice."

The two men laughed good-humouredly at their defeat, and the matter was at an end—so Lacy thought.

The long-looked-for rain came at last, and Jack Spraggatt was in great spirits, although it kept him a prisoner indoors during the greater part of the day. He employed himself in writing to his sister Letty, preferring the counting-house to the parlour for the operation, and never told any one what he had done, or why he had posted the letter himself.

Nothing more was said in open council about the educational project, although Warner and Jack, it must be confessed, meanly discussed the subject at odd times when they were together;

but Lucy had mentioned such a formidable obstacle to its fulfilment that it seemed to be impossible of realisation.

Jack's Christmas holidays were at an end, and despite the rain, he set off for his lonely home in the Bush, being more excited at parting than was customary with him. No doubt the welcome rain had something to do with it, as every hour's fall was worth a head or two of cattle, and they were not to be neglected after the losses occasioned by the long drought.

When he had been fairly gone some four or five hours, Warner was surprised to receive by a messenger a letter, directed in Jack's handwriting. That stupid Bushman had a great objection to personal communication whenever he had to ask a favour or to offer a service, and as he now wanted to do both, he had had recourse to pen, ink, and paper.

The letter ran thus :

"MY DEAR WARNER,—The conversation which we had on the subject of Florence's education has

never been out of my head. I have thought of it night and day, until I have come to the following conclusion and determination.

“Lucy, you, and I are all of opinion that there could be nothing more desirable for our darling’s advantage than the suggestion *we* made; but Lucy very properly mentioned a difficulty, which I now fancy can be overcome. This bountiful rain will make the matter easy. I reckon that I am worth at least 8000*l.*, and as I have no debts (thank God!) I am an independent man for the rest of my days. My next neighbour is my old townsman of whom we used to talk in days gone by, and, as you know, one of the richest men in the colony. Now as this glorious rain will put him into good spirits, as it has done me, I intend to call upon him in a few days and offer him my location just as it stands—stock and block, and I know he will be glad to purchase. Having completed that bargain to our mutual satisfaction, I AM DETERMINED to go to Europe; and if you will do me the favour to entrust our darling Florence to my care, I shall be the

happiest Uncle Jack in the new world or the old. My own DETERMINATION nothing shall change. I shall communicate all my great schemes for next year to the purchaser of my location, and so nothing will be lost to the colony by my secession.

"Now, dear Warner—dearest Lucy, consider over again our talk concerning the future of our darling, and make a parental sacrifice for her life-long benefit. I know I am a selfish old fellow in asking this, because I shall not have to part with her as you will have to do; but I am sure if I were in your place I could bring myself to the separation, knowing how much she has to gain by it.

"I wrote to Letty when I was at Bathurst, proposing that *we* should come over to her. She will be delighted no doubt, and by the time her answer arrives in the colony all can be prepared for our departure by the next ship.

"I have nothing more to add than I have already said to you, so with love to you all,

"Believe me your affectionate Brother-in-law,

"JOHN SPRAGGATT."

There was an end of the great difficulty ! There was the little one with Lucy to be surmounted ; but as all her life she had made small sacrifices for those she loved, this greater one—the greatest she had then been called upon to make, either as sister, mother, or wife, was accepted also—and humbly putting her trust in the One who had supported her through other trials, she consented to part with more than half her heart.

Letty's letter came in due time ; it was full of loving welcome, and Jack sold himself up a second time to gratify a love which had grown stronger than common, because of an earlier one which he had known years ago. Florence was delighted at times when anticipating the approaching change ; at others she thought it would be impossible to part from those dear ones who had made her life so happy. Nor were Lucy and her husband without their alternations of joy and sorrow when contemplating the separation from their child ; and when the parting hour arrived, and Florence was gone, they were dearer

to each other than ever they had been throughout their wedded lives.

O treacherous sea ! that smooth as a mirror hides beneath thee unfathomable deeps, and dangerous shoals, and hidden rocks to make wreck of so many, many brave ships, less treacherous art thou than the sea of life, where there are deeps, and shoals, and rocks, but where shipwreck is often nearest when the sun shines brightest, and the breezes sigh odorous with the breath of flowers.

CHAPTER IV.

GILBERT NORWOLD PROVES THAT A BAD SON MAKES A BAD FATHER.

THE events which occurred in England, from the time that Gilbert Norwold attained his majority have now to be regarded. The property he inherited under the will of his father, and the settlement of his mother, was not very considerable, although it was sufficient for the moderate requirements of an English gentleman. Gilbert was what is termed a man of pleasure, but he combined with his own unrestrained enjoyments, an almost miserly care of his money, and bought his selfish pleasures as cheaply as possible.

He made no friends, and sought few associates among persons of his own station in society, nor was his morose and selfish disposition likely to invite advances from others. The few persons of his acquaintance were, therefore, somewhat sur-

prised when it was announced in the *Morning Post*, that Mr. Gilbert Norwold, had married the only daughter of a country banker, reported to be very rich, and possessing considerable county influence. The marriage had been one with which strong affection on either side had had little to do, as the lady had given away her first love to one whom her father had rejected, and who paid the penalty of his presumption, for loving in his poverty the rich man's daughter, by the abandonment of his native land, and hard service in India. So, having parted with the great treasure of her maiden love, there was only left a gentle, amiable woman, who passively yielded up her future hopes to the will of her father, and he had decided to entrust them to the keeping of Mr. Gilbert Norwold. What Gilbert's consideration was in seeking this union, it is very easy to guess, and to express by one word, "Money;" and as that could be obtained with no particular objectionable contingency, by his union with Laura Ravenshaw, he married her. Ready cash and formal settlements supplied

the want of mutual love, and gay dresses, merry bells and great feasting, made the wedding-day appear a happy one; and there were lookers on, struggling with many of the difficulties of life, who silently envied the more prosperous fortunes of the young bride and bridegroom, as their neat travelling carriage rolled away from the banker's door.

For some time this union proved to be, not a happy one certainly, as some doting men and women estimate wedded happiness, neither was it altogether unhappy, as neither husband nor wife had brought much expectation of affectionate recognition from each other. Gilbert went his way as it pleased him best, with no regard or inquiry as to the pleasure of his wife, and she, too indifferent as to the pursuits of her husband, was rarely disturbed by a course of conduct, which a more interested woman would have construed into neglect. When her son was born, she felt that a blessing had come into her home, although his birth had brought her loss of health, and consequently greater estrangement

on the part of her husband. It was well for her that she had found this comfort, as an unexpected cause of great sorrow and disunion came with the death of her father.

The settlement which had been made at her marriage, provided for the payment of certain moneys, when the banker had no further use for his wealth, but as an elder son would inherit from his father, the money thus secured was to pass to any second child, living at the time of the mother's death, and failing such issue Gilbert became sole inheritor, provided he should survive his wife. . The old banker had been a clever schemer and manager, a driver of hard bargains, and a bold speculator during his lifetime ; but like many other sharp adventurers, he had ended in failure so complete, that simple men wondered how he had contrived to die in the odour of respectability.

The compact, therefore, between Gilbert Norwold and Laura Ravenshaw—they had called it marriage—was at an end, at least, so far as he was concerned. All the promises which he had

made at the altar, were cancelled in his mind by the failure of the banker to keep the covenants of the settlement, for which he had sold his liberty, and there was in no corner of his heart one hidden love to whisper a word of kindness or consideration, for the mother of his child. He had been wronged, deeply wronged, where he could feel injury the most, by the dead father of his wife, and he revenged himself upon her, by as much domestic tyranny as he could exercise without interfering with his own convenience. He made ostentatious retrenchments of expenses, and dismissed one or two servants immediately necessary to the comfort of his wife, whose declining health required more than ordinary attention. "This great loss," he would say, "must be met by economy, and if that is disagreeable to you, you must only blame the old rogue, who has occasioned it." This was a bitter thing to hear, as Laura loved her father, despite the one cruel act, which had seemed, at its committal, sufficient to cancel all her former obligations; but she re-

membered that she had known a happy childhood, and a girlhood when money had been lavishly expended with the desire to compensate for the sorrow which he had occasioned, by the rejection of her first lover. She could not understand the chicanery of which he was accused; but believed that he was subjected to the injustice which usually is meted out to the unfortunate; and so she loved his memory still, and trusted that when the first hour of disappointment had passed, her husband would forgive, if he could not forget, the injury he had sustained.

She was mistaken in Gilbert Norwold. The world, he thought, had revenged itself upon him for his own misdoings, and having suffered persecution, alas, for him, and those connected with him, he had "not learned mercy." Day by day, whenever they had been together, he left her with some new taunt to bear her company through the many lonely hours, of which her life was composed, and, but for the companionship of her little son, her lot would have been miserable indeed. As her health continued to decline,

he declared his intention of giving up their house in town, altogether, and arranged that she should have a simpler home at a watering-place, thus removing her from the very small circle of visiting friends, and which had grown less since the disclosures at her father's death, and the more limited expenditure permitted to her in consequence.

She went, therefore, into the solitude of a populous watering-place, where she had no acquaintance, and as Gilbert's business matters—so he said—kept him much employed in London and elsewhere, she rarely had other companionship than her own small household supplied. It was not wonderful, therefore, that Edward, her little son, became invested with all the love of her whole woman's soul, and in her plans for his future, she forgot the sorrow and the sickness which surrounded her. As his growing intelligence found utterance, she seemed to need no other society, and her days ceased to be wearisome, except when some childish ailment made her associate with it the dreadful possibility of

death stealing away her precious treasure: How she would watch, then, that little face, as though seeking to learn from the pallid cheek or the fevered lip, the approaching danger, and by her silent prayers seek to preserve to her the only solace of her almost widowhood. With what thankfulness and increased love, it seemed, did she receive him back again from that perilous chance wherein his life had been engaged, and hardly came to laugh at her own fears, when experience had taught her how slight had been the peril. But one was at hand, who would prove to her as cruel as death, and do his work in part?

The boy grew into a fine sturdy fellow, and received such mental culture as he was capable of obtaining at a small school devoted to children of his age and condition; and Laura would watch his going and returning with a glad heart, for she knew that he would be a bright man, and would fight as bravely for his place in the world as he did at school, for he brought home evidences of his class victories, and upon one occa-

sion, a swollen nose and a reddened eye, obtained in a gallant skirmish in the playground.

Laura, for a moment or two, hated the little hero who had left those marks upon her boy, but forgave him heartily when she learned that "he was the best fellow in the school, and had given in after the tenth round, and was coming to tea the next evening, if mamma pleased to let him."

Why chronicle such simple instances of a mother's love, when the maternal eyes which may honour these pages with their regards, have read them in their children's lives a hundred times, and never thought them worth recording? They are here set down in sorrowful remembrance of her, who, having known them to the full, had the pretty book wherein they were to be found torn away, so rudely, that her eyes grew dimmer daily from her tears, and until she closed them for ever.

Gilbert Norwold had been away in Germany for some months, and on his return to England came to his family, bringing with him nothing

which made them happier. Edward had been studiously taught to love and honour his father, but children are stubborn learners in the matter of the affections, and remember no lessons that have not been practically illustrated. A cold kiss, short questions, and curt replies, were all that Edward received when his father came or left him, and the boy soon lost all recollection of such brief courtesies, and returned the love of his father in the same proportions as he had received it. He was to receive a proof of his father's care, which, as it might be conducive to his after good, produced in the mind of the boy a sense of injury undefined, yet poignant, which never was entirely effaced, but did its evil work in time to come. This would not have been the case had after-reflection been able to trace in the severity of the act, the hand of parental love seeking to direct the growth of a cherished object, and had he known that a mutual pain must have been inflicted in the process. It was not thus, however, that Gilbert Norwold did his fatherly duty. It was harshly, coldly—even brutally

accomplished, and it did the work it was, perhaps, intended to do.

"He had," he said, briefly, "made arrangements to send Edward to school in Germany."

"Alone?" asked the terrified mother.

Of course, to be left alone, although he would make the journey in care of the proprietor of the school. The father had made every inquiry as to the treatment of pupils and course of education, by which the boy would have the chance of becoming a scholar, and of learning that self-reliance which made more than half the success of a man's career.

If this dreadful resolve had been only hinted at a little—a very little time before, so that Laura might have realised the prospect of such a separation by degrees;—if it had then been named as a project to be acted upon hereafter, when her reason could have held some conference with her love, and been brought to acknowledge the necessity for the sacrifice which was asked of her, there might have been some hope that the proposal would have been heard with patience, and possibly,

assented to with resignation. As it was, she repelled the outrage, and drawing her boy to her side, she said:—

“Gilbert, you cannot have the heart to do this thing! You have been a cruel husband to me for years past, but I have borne all—have I not?—patiently and obediently. You have shut me up here away from the few friends who cared for me, and left me to pursue your own courses unrestricted and unquestioned. I have not complained. You have told me you have suffered great wrong at my father's hands, and you have weighed your conduct to me, and to this child, against the lost money. I said let it be so! If that will expiate my father's wrong, let it be so! Throughout that time I have had but one consolation, and a great one it has been truly. My love for this boy has sustained me when nothing else could have done so, and I should have died, I doubt not. You would now take him from me for no justifiable reason. You would send him away, and I— and I am never likely to see him more on this side the grave.”

She paused from exhaustion, whilst Edward clung to her, never removing his eyes from her face, and never forgetting to his life's end the sorrow he then saw in it.

"Have you done, madam?" asked Norwold, apparently unmoved.

"No! I have not told you all I have to say. I see, at once, that I am complaining to a heart of stone, and shall not move you to show me and this child any compassion. Let that pass. The law gives you no right to take my child from me, and nothing but brute force shall separate us. If you will resort to that, I will appeal to the law, and make public the wretched life I have led at your bidding, to be made utterly miserable by what you propose to do. Now I have finished."

"I am glad to hear it," answered Norwold; "and now listen to me. If you think to deter me from following any course which I think it my duty to pursue, you are mistaken, madam. I believe it to be my duty to send that boy from your teaching and your indulgence, and to have

him brought up as a man and a gentleman. I shall take the course I consider best for the accomplishment of my views, and to-morrow morning Edward goes with me to France, and thence to Germany. Now I have finished."

He placed his hat upon his head, deliberately arranged his cravat by the glass, and then walked out of the room, closing the door gently after him. His footsteps were heard in the street marking slow-time, as though he were perfectly composed, and Laura saw from the window that he was proceeding to the beach. She saw that he sat down upon the shingle, and after a few moments began to cast stones into the sea, as though he had no grave thoughts in his mind, and was satisfied with that childish amusement.

Laura then carried her terrified boy into her bed-room, and having kissed him passionately, removed the traces of tears from his face and her own. Taking from her jewel-case its valuable contents (her father's gifts) and placing them in her reticule, she proceeded with much deliberation to dress Edward, as for walking, and then

put on her own bonnet and shawl, and all this without speaking a word. When their *toilettes* were completed, she kissed the boy again, and said :

“Come, my child.”

“Where are we going, mamma?” asked the lad.

“I don’t know, dear,” replied his mother. “I have not quite decided. God will guide us.”

They went out into the busy town, and made their way to the coach office, where they learned that the afternoon coach to London started in an hour. Laura secured two inside places, giving the name of Lauriston. Nothing could have been more calm and collected than her manner, even when she saw Norwold pass the shop where she was waiting the departure of the coach, and enter the hotel nearly opposite. She accepted that incident as an assurance that her flight to London was less likely to be discovered by her husband. The coach started at last, and it was with difficulty that she could reply to the boy’s inquiries concerning the objects they passed on

the road, until the second change had been made, and she fancied they were secure from pursuit. Until then she had feared that Norwold might have returned to her house, and been curious as to her absence. She needed not to have disquieted herself, as that gentleman was quietly taking his dinner, and remained over his wine until late in the evening; when, having a regard for his digestion, he slept where he had dined.

When Laura arrived in London, she ordered a hackney coach and proceeded direct to the house of her husband's agent, Mr. Jasper Jellifer, to the utter consternation of that self-seeking person. He had, as we know, left Morden, and was now engaged as a commission agent, and dealt in everything that promised to yield him a profit.

"Mr. Jellifer," said Laura, "you are, I see, surprised to find me here; but I have come to town very unexpectedly, and, having been away from London so long, I venture to intrude upon you."

"Oh, no intrusion, madam," said Jellifer.

"None in the least. Does Mr. Norwold know of your coming?"

"Not at present," replied Laura, curtly. "I must trespass upon your kindness for a bed, and to-morrow I will tell you my business in London."

Jellifer was in a quandary. He knew pretty well that his employer, Mr. Norwold, and his lady, were not the most attached couple in the world, and he was fearful of placing himself in some difficulty by receiving the wife unknown to her husband. He, therefore, stammered out how much pleasure he felt at being of service, and retreated to consult Mrs. Jellifer, who, with the quickness of her sex, instantly surmised that there had been some domestic difference, and with natural curiosity, was anxious to know all about it, especially as she could see no damage to Jasper from affording a night's shelter to the lady and child of their excellent and honoured employer, Mr. Norwold. Besides, Jasper would become master of the situation, should there be any mystery on foot, and she

knew enough of her worthy help-mate to be certain that he would find a way to turn such a position to his advantage. Laura, however, was provokingly uncommunicative, as her only purpose in seeking Jellifer was to obtain a shelter for the night, intending in the morning to ask the assistance of a friend of her late father, and whose place of business only was known to her, as it was there she had been taken when she signed her marriage settlement. In her terror and her simplicity, she had overlooked the danger she had incurred by carrying her dove into the nest of the hawk.

During her sleepless night this thought occurred to her, and she became impatient for daybreak, when she might redeem the mistake she had made, supposing the Jellifers to be base enough to betray her to her husband, should they suspect that she had left home without his consent or knowledge. The morning came at last, but with it the consequences of the excitement of the previous day and night, and the poor fugitive exhausted in mind and body, was incapable of

further exertion. Fever succeeded, and then as Mrs. Jellifer sat by the bed-side, she listened to mutterings and delirious utterances which told her almost all the truth of Laura's flight and intention.

The course of Jasper Jellifer was clear enough to him when he had heard his wife's revelation. He started instantly to Mr. Norwold's chambers in the Albany, arriving there shortly after that gentleman, who had posted up to London directly the flight of his wife and son came to his knowledge. The face of Gilbert had almost a fiendish expression as he listened to Jellifer's communication ; and without staying to partake of the refreshment which he had ordered, he returned with Jasper to the house, where his wife was lying unconscious even of her own suffering. When Gilbert stood beside the bed of the fever-stricken woman, whom he had sworn to love and cherish, it is only the truth to record that he looked upon her unmoved, and without a feeling of pity. His stubborn, selfish nature felt no remorse, and he found his justification in the reflection that her

own act had produced the result he now witnessed. Jasper was ordered to procure the needful medical aid, concealing the patient's name and condition, and then conduct the boy to the Albany, where some person should be waiting to receive him.

For some days it was thought that Mrs. Norwold would succumb to the fever, as her weakened constitution was adverse to her recovery; but she improved at last, and when consciousness returned, her first inquiry was for the boy.

She listened to Mrs. Jellifer's reply without any visible emotion, and when the physician came again he shook his head despondingly, and said, "Something is very wrong, indeed."

For days and days the poor patient continued to lie almost in a stupor, and when at length "the shadow of death" passed away, she appeared to have forgotten all things, even her child. At last, when death, the merciful, came to release her spirit, the cloud over her mind seemed to pass away, and with her saddened face turned heavenward, she murmured the name of her boy, and died.

In due time Gilbert Norwold took his son to Germany, and as there was no longer a dear mamma at home, Edward was contented enough to remain with the really kind schoolmaster and his wife, who, knowing something of the history of the past, strove to win the love of the little fellow: and as children are grateful receivers of kindness, they soon succeeded in their pious object, receiving, in return, almost filial affection and obedience, through the twelve years that Edward remained under their charge, as he continued to reside with them after he had entered the University.

Norwold saw Edward occasionally when he paid holiday visits to Germany, and their correspondence was regular and at appointed intervals—that was all which passed between them—so that the father gained no place in the heart of his son, as he never sought it, but left him to remember always the miserable day when he clung terrified to his mother's side, and looked up into her face, and noted the agony, fear, and sorrow then depicted upon it. When Edward grew to

know the meaning of all that he then saw and heard, remembering his mother, his mind became filled with angry thoughts which he never tried to restrain.

The incision made in the rind of the sapling grows into a scar as time progresses, and nothing can efface it.—WAIT FOR THE END.

CHAPTER V..

JACK SPRAGGATT HAVING HAD HIS OWN WAY,
DOES NOT WAIT FOR THE CONSEQUENCES.

THE *diligence* from Havre was half-an-hour behind its time, and as Madame Letty and her husband had anticipated the hour appointed for its arrival by full thirty minutes, their excitement was intense when the loud cracking of the driver's whip, and the thundering rumble of the stupendous conveyance announced that the long-looked-for had come at last. The expectation depicted in the faces of M. and Madame Fichard, however, gradually faded away when the *coupe*, *banquette*, and *rotonde* disgorged themselves of their passengers, and no one resembling Jack Spraggatt and their unknown niece presented themselves. Unless, perhaps, the rough-bearded man who was speaking most execrable French, and claiming a multitude of packages, partly by words and

partly by muscular demonstration, could be he, and the pretty slender girl who seemed to have lost herself in wondering at all she saw, could be Florence Warner.

"Il est à moi, I tell you!" said rough beard.
"Regardez-vous mon nom on the trunk, you fool. John Spraggatt!"

It was he!

"Mais non, M'seur," replied the porter. "Il est Mademoiselle Warner!"

That must be Florence.

"Tout le même! Tout le même!" cried Jack.
"Je suis Mademoiselle Warner aussi—that is, I'm her uncle," and turning round to corroborate the assertion by an appeal to Florence, he was surprised to see her folded in the embrace of a plump lady, who was supported in her turn by the arm and large cotton umbrella of a portly Frenchman, who waved above their heads a white beaver hat of considerable dimensions.

"Good gracious!" thought Jack; "Letty can't have grown to that size, nor can M. Fichard have swollen to that figure in twenty years!"

In a moment his doubts were removed, as Madame and M. Fichard transferred their embraces to his own portly figure, and when Monsieur impressed a brother-in-law's kiss upon the sunburnt cheek of the colonist, his blushes fairly illuminated his beard and whiskers.

Jack's first impulse was to knock down his affectionate relative; but, remembering that it was the custom of the country, he contented himself with rubbing his face, and giving in return a shake of the hand which left the receiver's fingers powerless for a few minutes.

Letty carried off her niece forthwith in a *fiacre*, leaving her husband and Jack to follow with the luggage, and to satisfy the host of clamorous porters, who had all done nothing to assist in its transfer from the *diligence* to the *voitures*, which were now driven away to M. Fichard's residence in the *Champs Élysées*.

The route from the *Messageries* was through some of the best streets in Paris, and Florence was entranced with the wonders which she saw on every side. The grand houses, the beautiful

shops, the stately public buildings, the noble *Places*, the gay dresses of the people, all combined to fascinate and surprise her. She was indeed in the Fairy Land of which she had dreamed so often; but oh! how unmeasurably it exceeded all that she had conceived of this abode of pleasure! What she had heard of it was true, then! and how she loved that dear Aunt Letty, who had, like the good godmothers in her fairy-books, called her over the sea from that drowsy Bathurst, to share in the delights which abounded everywhere in this happy city. And then, when she was almost dizzy with succeeding novelties, how grateful was the change to the green trees and flower-beds of the *Champs Élysées*, and the groups of happy children keeping long holiday under their shade—now filling the swings and roundabouts—now spending countless *sous* in lemonade and gingerbread, whilst their white-capped attendant *bonnes* plied their needles, or chatted to some gallant soldier, who, released awhile from his duty to Mars, was devoting himself to the service of Cupid, until

lured away by some eloquent mountebank or juggler, or *prima donna* of the *café concerts*.

The *fiacre* stopped at one of the lofty houses near the *Rond-Point*, and Florence could hardly believe that she heard correctly when she was told that there her home was to be so long as she pleased to make it so. There was a shop for the sale of furniture on the ground floor, and M. Fichard occupied the *premier* and *deuxième*, a domestic arrangement which somewhat surprised the young colonist. The other apartments were distributed, as they usually are in French houses, among lodgers, who rarely have any intercourse with each other. The only person with whom the Fichards were acquainted was Herr Dortz, an old Teuton, who professed to teach French, English, and German, to any one desirous of acquiring those languages at 3 frs. a lesson. He lived in the capital of this domiciliary pillar, and which would have been called the attic in this common-place England.

There was no doubt how welcome the visitors

were to their hospitable relatives, and Jack had a long battle with the Fichards before those kindly people would consent to make terms for Florence's future residence with them. They protested, entreated, resented, but all to no purpose. Jack was firm as a rock, as he had promised Warner to make a fair arrangement, and if M. and Madame Fichard refused to allow him to fulfil his mission, why he should take Florence to England, and place her in some boarding-school. This idea was positively revolting to M., Madame, and Ma'amselle, and so the Fichards accepted the hard conditions on which they could retain their niece, and Jack Spraggatt had his way. The delayed recognition of this delicate treaty had not been permitted to interfere with their enjoyments, and Florence had been taken to more wonders, and had heard and seen more pleasant things than she had ever believed the great world contained. Letty was an admirable *chaperone*, as time had not destroyed her own relish for such agreeable excitements; and some staid guardians might

have paused to consider, whether she was quite the right person to be entrusted with the charge of a young impressionable girl, whose mind had to be directed and formed, coming, as it were, from the nursery life of the new world into the dazzling fascinations of the Pleasure metropolis of the old.

If Letty were not the most proper guide and teacher, Jack Spraggatt was the last man to discover it. The long years of absence from each other had made him love Letty more than he had ever done before, and to see Florence so happy in her new state, blinded him to any dangers that might lie hidden among the flowers about her path. Such reflections might have come to him had he been permitted to have remained a looker-on for any length of time, but the first mail which followed him from Bathurst brought news that Warner had met with a serious accident, and that he requested Jack to return by the next ship in case of need. This painful intelligence—so far as her father was concerned, had to be kept from Florence, and she parted from Uncle

Jack, believing him to be a very unsettled naughty old fellow.

"Ah, Florence! dear Florence!" said that maligned individual, "when next we meet it will be to put the great sea between us no more, I trust. May God guide and guard you until that good time comes, and ever afterwards."

A good ship and a skilful mariner left little to fear for Uncle Jack in his long voyage back to the new world; but who could say with such a frail bark as Florence Warner, and with such a pilot as Madame Letty, what course would be steered, or what haven they would make?

Florence soon perceived her educational deficiencies, and therefore set to work with a will to acquire the French language, not, however, under the tutelage of Herr Dortz, but assisted by one of the best masters of Paris. The old German was content to teach her his own language, and his report of her capacity and assiduity was equally favourable with those of her music and dancing masters, so that when the letters of Florence were read aloud in the home

in the distant colony, Warner and Uncle Jack were delighted at the wisdom of the course they had advised and followed, and Lucy endeavoured to be satisfied also. She was not always successful, for she feared that her love and watchfulness might still be wanting, to chide with gentleness, or to direct with prudence her susceptible and wayward child. They barter to a disadvantage who exchange for the loving care of a perfect mother any other earthly promise, though it may lead to a throne.

Time mowed among flowers, and Florence gathered them up for a long summer year, and until she was nineteen—sweet nineteen. To keep her birthday, and to give poor Herr Dortz an opportunity of taking baths for the obstinate rheumatism which afflicted him, it was determined to spend a week at *Enghein les Bains*, six miles from Paris; and because it was a very pleasant place in summer time, when balls and *fêtes* were of frequent occurrence. The change of scene from the white glare of the streets of Paris to the beautiful valley of Mont-

morency was acceptable to all, and the numerous amusements of *les Bains* moderated the transition from the gaieties of the city, and left nothing to be desired or regretted.

In one of their morning strolls, Herr Dortz had the pleasure of meeting a former pupil, one who had benefited by his instruction some six years ago in Germany, and this chance recognition was evidently gratifying to both.

"My bubil M. Edward, my dear bubil Edward," said Herr Dortz, speaking what he was pleased to consider English. "He has come to *les Bains* for a day of pleasure, and he has not found it. Shall we not help him to find what he has come to seek? and ask him to be of our party?"

The Fichards were not the churls to reject such a proposition, so M. Edward was invited to join in an extemporised pic-nic, and a visit to the *Hermilage*, where once resided Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The little party had been increased to nearly a dozen, by the adherence of some acquaintance of the Fichards, and as they all brought

good spirits and easy tempers to the sylvan *fête*, the day passed away so merrily that Florence was surprised to find the daylight going. It is true, that for nearly all the latter part of the day, she had been listening to M. Edward's jokes and stories, and snatches of song in French, German, and English; for, as in duty bound, he had been the cavalier to Aunt Letty and herself. All the way back to Enghein the German and M. Edward interchanged old pleasantries with each other, as though the pupil had so much youth in him that he had lent part of it to his old master. To dissolve immediately such a pleasant union as the little party had made that day, would have been folly, and therefore it was resolved and carried unanimously, that they should all meet at the ball later in the evening. All were faithful to their tryst—the ball commencing at the rational hour of eight. Mr. Edward proved as good a dancer as he had been a talker, and Florence could not refuse him when he asked her for the third time to become his partner in a *quadrille*. As every one had come there to

dance, and all carried out their intention to the full, they were satisfied when the clock struck eleven, and the tired band followed their example. Oh, what a moon shone forth that night to light the happy revellers to their homes, and the chaste goddess would not have looked down thus benignly had there been anything to censure in mirth harmless as theirs. Would that cold moonlight ever change to an unextinguishable flame consuming all remembrance of duty, and of willing sacrifices made through years of love?

M. Edward's day of pleasure had been so satisfactory—of course, because it had renewed his intimacy with dear Herr Dortz,—that he resolved to continue for the rest of the week at Enghein, and try the baths also, in case, at any future day rheumatism should be his portion. A bad reason, says the adage, is better than none; or so lame an excuse, M. Edward, should have condemned you to solitary confinement, until all but your old preceptor, had departed. Three short—how very short! happy days passed away, and then M. Fichard being compelled to return to his

business in Paris, the little party embraced where permissible, and otherwise made their *adieux*, going their several ways, and taking with them some of the sunshine of the past to brighten many a shadowy hour in the time to come.

The next lesson which Herr Dortz attempted to give Florence should not have been charged in the account, as Aunt Letty came into the room and continued all the time usually devoted to study, talking over the events of their pleasant holiday, and commending Herr Dortz for having introduced such an agreeable addition to their party as M. Edward, whose surname, by the way, had never been mentioned. Herr Dortz could not for the life of him recollect it, as he had always called him Edward when he was under his tutelage, but he would ask him when he called again, if Madame wished it.

He had called, then?

No doubt of it, and had even proposed for a course of reading, in order to refresh his German. There was nothing surprising or unusual in such an incident, and yet Florence

felt the blood mount into her face, as she said involuntarily, "Indeed!" Herr Dortz was proud of his old pupil, grateful, perhaps, for the proposed employment, and he talked so glibly and earnestly of his good qualities and acquirements that, as we have said, the German lesson was forgotten, although the whisperings of a new language was possibly heard by one of the listeners.

As M. Edward descended the stairs after his next visit to Herr Dortz, he stopped at the *premier* landing place, and rang the bell at M. Fichard's door. The ladies were abroad, and therefore he left a card inscribed Mr. Edward Norwold, No. 6, Rue St. Honoré.

Aunt Letty was vexed not to have been at home, the more so as the name—not a very singular one—set her wondering whether ~~he~~ was any connection of the Norwolds she had known years ago. But for that circumstance we question whether she would have pressed M. Fichard so earnestly to call the ensuing day, and ask M. Edward to favour them with his company to dinner.

À la bonne heure! The young gentleman was luckily within, and the invitation was one of the most agreeable that could have presented itself. Herr Dortz, too, was invited—poor fellow! he had rarely any engagements—to meet his pupil, and at six o'clock the party of five sat down to a small, well arranged dinner, made additionally agreeable by the interest all had in each other.

"The sight of your name," said Aunt Letty, as the dinner and conversation progressed, "carried me from France to England, as I was born at Morden."

"Morden! Morden!" said Edward, "I rather fancy I have some recollection of that name—but it has been my father's pleasure to allow me to visit England once only, and that for a very short time, since I left for Germany. I was then quite a child."

"There was a family of your name living at Morden," continued Letty, "and I thought you might have been a connection."

"Possibly I am," replied Edward, "but for some unexplained reason I have been kept away

from all my family connections, and having only very painful recollections of my childhood, I have been contented with my exile, and shall be more so since you have admitted me to the pleasure of your friendship."

Aunt Letty acknowledged such a compliment with the sweetest smile and most graceful bow, although she felt that Mr. Edward Norwold did not care to be questioned, and that the subject was painful to him. Yes, he had said so. The conversation, therefore, went upon other subjects, and it was evident that Mr. Edward Norwold had known a great many good people wherever he had travelled, and was well-received in Paris. He was a gentleman,—no doubt of that. When he was leaving later in the evening, he asked permission to call occasionally, as it was more than probable that he should continue in Paris for another year, until he was of age and at liberty to choose his own career for the future. "I hope I shall find," he added, "that I am connected with your old friends."

"Oh! they were not friends," said Letty.

"Well then, with Moreton."

"Morden," said Letty, correcting him.

"Morden, Morden, I shall not forget the name again, as I have done, if it was ever known to me before," and then having bade them all good night, he went his way.

"He is a very nice fellow," said Aunt Letty, "but not one of our Norwolds, evidently," and having this conviction, and not seeing so plainly as we do, what was looming in the future, she continued to call him Mr. Edward, and never mentioned this meeting to her sister in any of her letters, for how could the Warners in New South Wales care to know that she had met a stray Norwold in Paris?

Florence had, we fancy, received another lesson in that language of which she had heard the whispering, when Herr Dortz was the teacher, as she sat long at her window peopling the Elysian Fields with creations of her own, long after the lights of the *cafés concerts* had disappeared among the trees, and the hum of the adjoining streets had given place to silence.

A worn goose-quill, telling of long labour accomplished, is not the instrument wherewith to trace the bright hopes and the sweet words of a pure first love, and we have none other. Yet we must record, that insensibly, undesignedly, as we pass from youth to age, the pleasant companionship of Florence and Edward Norwold grew into love.

Great mystery of our nature! who can define it? Some speaker's voice long lingers on the ear when the lips which breathed the words are hushed and absent. Simple phrases that may have been heard a hundred times before, when uttered by that voice, live in the heart, and come like recurrent echoes, A form pursues the thought, and will not be denied, until it becomes the constant companion of our waking hours and our dreams, making no pleasure perfect where it is not. Then grow within us a great charity which blinds us to all faults, and a liberal fancy which conceives perfections until a willing faith receives them as realities. All self-love dies, and our strong desires, whether for wealth, fame, life, or

honour, must be joined to a hope that one will share the blessing, or they stimulate no more. The mind becomes subservient to its idol, and trains itself to make its worship perfect. And more——

No! the words we have written shall remain, but they do not describe what love is—what love should be—nor what it was in the young pure hearts of those whose fate it was about to influence so materially.

CHAPTER VI.

A CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE OPENLY PERFORMED.

A DAY'S holiday at Meudon having been arranged by the Fichards, a pleasant drive of some five or six miles brought them to the *château*, Edward riding upon the box, as the old German was, as usual, of the party. After an inspection of the house and beautiful gardens, which occupy an elevated situation, commanding an admirable view of Paris and the meanderings of the graceful Seine, the little party took their way to the adjoining forest, the gentlemen carrying the baskets containing the materials for their repast, whilst the ladies carried M. Fichard's great umbrella and fluffy white hat. There was no difficulty in finding a fitting resting place in the forest, and a snowy cloth spread upon the green-sward was soon covered with *pâtés*, salads, chickens, and strawberries, whilst M. Edward

went to the house of one of the keepers for fresh water, and a jug of cream. Three or four bottles of wine completed the arrangements for their simple meal, which was heartily enjoyed. As on all occasions, M. Edward's attentions were equally divided between Madame Letty and Florence, and therefore the other gentlemen had little to do but enjoy themselves.

The day was beautifully fine, and there was a laziness in the air which soon overpowered M. Fichard, until he fell asleep, leaning his back against a tree, whilst his wife, equally affected, laid her head upon his shoulder after covering her face with her handkerchief, and added, it must be recorded, a gentle treble to her husband's *basso profundo*. Herr Dortz had a passion for mushrooms, and was generally seized in season and out of season with an irresistible desire to search for them, and upon the present occasion he wandered away in pursuit of his coveted delicacy. Florence and M. Edward were left therefore to amuse themselves as best they could, and desired no additional society. Their conversation had

been about Paris and its gaieties, and M. Edward had inquired how long Florence intended to remain among them?

"I believe for another year at least," she replied, "and I shall leave France with regret."

"You are not affected then with the *maladie du pays*," said Edward, smiling.

"I am not, I confess, although my life at home was a very happy one. Were it not that I am apart from my dear, dear parents, I should have no wish to return. As it is, I would rather go back to Bathurst—dull, dreary Bathurst, than to any other place in the world."

"Indeed!" said Edward, looking her in the face, surprised to see it so suddenly saddened, and her eyes filled with tears. "Do you love your parents so very much?"

"Love them so much! I should be ungrateful indeed, did I not love them from the depth of my heart," replied Florence. "If you knew dear mamma, you would not wonder, as you seem to do, at the strength of my affection. So gentle, unselfish, and forbearing, never wearied by the

waywardness of her naughty child, never chiding her but with the tenderest words. O mother, dear mother, when shall I be with you again!" Florence clasped her hands together, and raised her tearful eyes, as though she sought her mother's face in the bright blue heaven above her head.

"And your father," said Edward, after a short pause—"do you love him as dearly?"

"Yes—quite, quite as dearly! When I had little griefs, so insignificant, that they are forgotten now, he used to soothe me with such caressing words, that I fear I sought occasion to be troubled that I might hear them. Such a noble, brave man he had been! Mamma has said again and again. He had suffered great wrong, when he was very young, and had neither repined nor despaired, but went to New South Wales, and made his home in the lonely Bush, and worked himself up to wealth and position. His injuries had purified his heart, mamma said, but had not cankered it, and all the goodness of his nature was cast about our lives, and made

us the happy household we were until ——”
Florence paused.

“May I ask you to go on?” said Edward.

“Yes, until I fear their love for me brought the first great sorrow home, and there it will continue until I return to them. And I will return and strive to do so contentedly, whenever Uncle Jack comes to take me home again.”

“Uncle Jack?” asked Edward. “Is he in Europe?”

“No, dear soft-hearted, loving Uncle Jack was recalled back to Bathurst after he had placed me with Aunt Letty. I knew not at the time that it was an accident to my father which made his return necessary, or I should have gone with him. What think you, M. Edward? He sold his location in the Bush in order to bring me here, because his wayward niece had fancied that the colony was not good enough for her. Oh, you would so like Uncle Jack!”

M. Edward was sitting with his knees clasped in his hands, looking thoughtfully before him. At length he said slowly, “Father, mother, and

Uncle Jack, and all loved, and all loving so very dearly! I had a mother who loved me very dearly, Miss Warner, although I never saw her gentle face without the trace of sorrow, even when it seemed most happy. She died when I was very young, died as I believe from cruel neglect, and wrong at the hands of one who should have cherished and protected her. I see her very often, see her now, and love her as a child would do—for my love has grown no wiser, no stronger since she died. Would it were otherwise." The speaker paused, and again looked thoughtfully before him.

"But your father, M. Edward, you have a father still," said Florence, at length.

"In name only! In name only! I was not eight years old when he took me to Germany, and left me in charge of a schoolmaster and his wife. Dear good souls, they faithfully discharged their trust, and in a measure filled the void in my infant heart. But my father,—*you* will hardly believe me,—I have not seen him, excepting during a short stay in England—twenty times

since my mother died. He put me away from him during her short life. He has left me to the care of strangers, contenting himself that his duty was done by paying money. He has defrauded me of the exercise of my affections, and has cheated me of the happiness of my childhood, for I already see that manhood brings its sorrows, and that life has its phases of struggle, victory, or defeat. I should have rebelled, uselessly rebelled years ago, but for the kindly remonstrance and advice of my dear old schoolmaster. Remembering his teaching, I have brought myself to bear with patience, and to perform with obedience whatever my *father* requires of me—until the time comes, another year only, when I shall be free to choose my own career. But the past will remain with me until my life's end—the cold, cruel, bitter past wherein since my mother died, I have found no outlet for the love which God has planted in our young hearts; because my father would not let it flow, but dammed it back by his own selfishness and pride, and wicked indifference!” Edward again clasped

his knees, and rocked himself to and fro, as though in bodily pain.

"Poor M. Edward," said Florence, her eyes once more filled with tears, "how much—how very much—I pity you. I am sorry that I spoke of your father."

"No—do not regret it, I beseech you, dear Miss Warner," he replied. "It is a relief—an unutterable relief to have told you this—to you who, so blessed in your own home relations, can feel for me, so lone and so deserted. The most pleasurable moments of my life have been those which I have passed with you—and these kind friends; and, I know not why, I cannot divest myself of a belief in your aunt's impression, that we are connected some way by old times or place, and I feel that I am not quite alone in yonder great city, as I was before I knew you. I bless Herr Dortz every day that he has made us known to each other."

Florence, as he spoke, could not keep her eyes fixed upon his, as had been her wont, but her long lashes drooped slowly down, and, with some difficulty, she said :—

“Was Herr Dortz your old schoolmaster?”

“No; he was an usher in the school, but pitying the poor lonely English lad, he showed me many kindnesses in his quiet way. I am glad to be his pupil again, as he so much needs one.” He paused, and then continued. “I see him yonder among the trees, coming towards us. Before he disturbs this strange, yet to me most happy meeting, allow me to ask you a great favour—a very great one.”

Florence would have spoken, but she could only smile most sweetly, and bow assent.

“Let me—” said Edward, looking intensely in earnest—“let me for the time to come call you Florence.”

Another bow, another smile, but the face was all over blushes as she assented now.

“O thank you, Florence!” (Her name had never sounded so musical before!) “One more request, one more—a greater still! Call me Edward. I will only believe that it is a sister speaking; but call me Edward.”

How could he press her with his earnest eyes

to answer, when he saw her full bosom rise and fall enough to stifle sound?

Thus implored, she made one effort, and murmured only—

“Edw—. No, no! I must say M. Edward; but—you will call me Florence!”

He seized her hand, and the involuntary shriek she gave made M. Fichard start from his stertorous slumber; and as Madame Letty was, very properly, leaning upon him for support, the portly lady rolled upon the grass.

A merry laugh from Herr Dortz, who had arrived; a merry laugh from M. Fichard, who had awakened, and from M. Edward, who could not help it; but such a confused bewildered look from pretty Florence, that her aunt would have been amazed had she regarded her.

There was nothing more to be done at Meudon but to distribute the fragments of the feast to the forester's children, pack up the *materiel* in the hand baskets, and then return to Paris. Herr Dortz was a great admirer of sunsets, and Edward tried to persuade him but in vain to

ride home on the box, in order that he might have a better view of Paris under departing daylight. No! the good old scholar would not deprive his generous pupil of such a pleasure, and insisted on re-occupying his seat next to Florence. Edward was ashamed of his own duplicity, as he read sincerity in the puckers and wrinkles of the old German's smile, and only forgave himself when he saw how beautiful was the one other face whereon he had looked, and found a sister's sympathy. The ride home was quickly performed, and M. Edward made his *adieux*, holding Florence's hand for a moment—only a moment longer than he had ever ventured to do before.

Only a moment! but we have ceased to measure events by time, even in less material things than nerves and hearts. The electric current makes "its circle round the earth" in time that is uncomputable; and why should not the invisible, impalpable influence that is to encompass a whole life perform its function in a moment.

As M. Edward had told Madame Letty of his compact with Florence, and as that lady saw no objection to it, especially as she herself was entreated to confer the same favour, and as M. Fichard and Madame had heard from their niece so much of the conversation in the forest of Meudon as Florence could or would remember to repeat, M. Edward's attention and visits were received without alarm or suspicion by all except the real object of them. Grateful as Florence felt them to be, they were not altogether without alloy, as she had at times a vague conviction that she was pursuing a clandestine course of conduct which was neither just to her unsuspecting and confiding aunt, nor to her absent and devoted parents. True, Edward had never said one word to her in secret which might not have been repeated without exciting a suspicion that it had a meaning far deeper than the words ordinarily conveyed; but there were looks and tones unheeded by all but her, which could not be mistaken by her pure and susceptible heart, and which were to become either balm or poison to

its peace. It was not possible for her to reject this knowledge, and so she came to believe that he loved her, even as she knew she had learned to love him. Her mother's quick affection and jealous eye would have discovered the great secret, hidden in her daughter's heart, seeing that there were pensive moments when Florence neither heard nor saw what was taking place around her. She would have noticed a flushing cheek and a sudden silence when some common-place was uttered, or some ordinary civility was performed. She would have observed an expressive smile or a downward glance, when Edward came or went away, and would have suspected the cause which made Florence so late a watcher, when she should have been sleeping peacefully. But between that dear, watchful mother, and her loving child, thousands of miles of water intervened, and she could only seek to guard her beloved one by her prayers and her written counsels.

The slumbering fire would surely find a breath to blow it into flame! It came from Edward's father.

Sir Gilbert Norwold—he was a baronet now—wrote to his son a formal dictatory letter, such as his communications to Edward had always been, reminding him that he would shortly be of age, and that as the family—he had married again some years before—were going to Switzerland, he would defer keeping the day until their return to London. Edward cared little for this indifference on the part of his father, he had been too long accustomed to such neglects; but there was, however, one passage in the letter which, for a time, stirred his indignation. Without consulting his son in any way, Sir Gilbert had arranged, he said, for Edward's early departure to India, where he was to enter the civil service, and provide for the future by the exercise of his own talent. This course would not have been objectionable, perhaps, had Edward been consulted; but he resented this despotic disposal of his life, and resolved at once to decline compliance.

The cooler counsels of M. Fichard obtained a hearing, and he was persuaded to wait the com-

pletion of his minority, and to avail himself of this ungracious offer, unless some fairer prospect was open to him.

"In India," said M. Fichard, "you will find your place, my dear young friend, and none that know you can doubt but it will be one of the foremost. You have no ties to break in this Europe of ours, so go to the land of the sun and become a Nabob."

No tie to break in Europe! Those words had convinced him for the first time, perhaps, that there was one united to his heart-strings—which it would be death to separate. To part from Florence! Never to hear the music of her voice again! To put the space of his whole life between their meeting! Such thoughts had never entered his mind before, and now that they came crowding in, he grew bewildered. There she sat, her sweet face almost as bloodless as his mother's when he looked upon it for the last time as she lay in her grave-clothes.

As motionless as though that which she had heard had been words of grammar changing her

into marble, sat Florence. She too had never thought that there could be a parting hour, but had trusted all to the happy, deceitful present.

Could he have been a living, loving man, and not spoken then? No!

"What have you said, M. Fichard?" he cried. "What have you said, that in a moment I seem to be changed from an apathetic clod into the most daring of mankind? No tie in Europe! No tie in this very chamber that I could break from and live! Oh, my dearest, only friends, forgive me if I have unwittingly betrayed your confidence; if I have, without consideration, perilled the peace of one who is more dear to you—more dear to me—than any other that loves her, be he who he may. Yes, I must speak—I cannot be silent now; I love her! I love you, Florence; and as you are a truthful, honest, loving woman, confess that you return my love."

He had thrown himself at her feet, and as he spoke, she fell back into the arms of her aunt as though his passionate words had killed her. It

was, however, but the similitude of death—the shadow of the king of shadows—and it soon passed away.

A nature less honest, less loving, or more schooled in worldly feelings, might have resented such a sudden onset to surprise her into a confession of the secret of her heart; but with the truthfulness to which he had appealed, she threw her answer into her face, and then fell weeping upon the neck of her kneeling lover.

All that followed was confused, painful, and pleasurable; each felt in turn that some great catastrophe had overtaken them, and that the last hours which had passed would be memorable as long as they should live.

Such a trying scene was not without its effect upon Florence, and for some days she had to keep her chamber. During this time, she and Aunt Letty had many conferences, and it was resolved that letters should be dispatched by the next mail to Bathurst, narrating all that had transpired, and asking the parental approval

of what chance, and not design, had made necessary to the future happiness of Florence.

As for Aunt Letty, it must be confessed that she was rather satisfied than otherwise with the course of events, now that she knew that Edward was the son of Sir Gilbert Norwold; and considering herself *in loco parentis*, she did not hesitate to allow the lovers free access to each other, planning, indeed, many pleasant excursions, and contriving other opportunities of meeting, believing that she was consulting the present and future happiness of her niece by so doing.

"It was very naughty of you, Florence," she said, "to fall in love without giving Aunt Letty notice of your intention to do so, and had it been with any unworthy person, I don't know what I should have done. Brother Jack, to say nothing of Mr. Warner and Lucy, would never have forgiven my want of foresight. It was very aly of you."

Florence could only smile, and declare the truth. That the act had been unpremeditated, and that no unworthy object could have

won her regard—of that she was certain. . But when all Edward's claims to be loved were considered, was it to be wondered at that she had given him her heart as soon as he had asked her for it?

"No, it was not to be wondered at," replied Letty; "and I am sure that your dear mamma will be delighted at the selection you have made. Only to think! Not only is he the most amiable, accomplished dear young fellow I know, but he is the heir to our native baronetcy, and must some day succeed to the Morden property and Norwold Hall, ruin that it is. They say the course of true love never does run smooth, but I see no reason, my darling, why yours should do otherwise, and therefore you have Aunt Letty's permission to love, and be as happy as two silly fond creatures can be."

Was Aunt Letty to blame? Not very much, looking at the case from the plaintiff's side of the question.

Edward had also written to Mr. Warner, detailing his family connections and future expecta-

tions. Had that letter reached its destination it would have been read as though traced by the hand of a destiny that sought to annul the deep injustice of the past, and to restore to Florence the advantages of her birthright, despite the abnegation of her father.

All the letters had been dispatched to the distant colony before any one thought of Sir Gilbert and the acceptance he was likely to accord to these arrangements for introducing Florence Warner into the proud family of the Norwolds as the wife of its future heir. M. Fichard was the first to speak of some possible difficulty, and Madame Letty turned pale at the thought.

Florence, also, when made to understand the importance that some persons attach to the distinctions of birth and connections, became conscious that her reception might be unsatisfactory, and her natural pride becoming alarmed, she resolved to speak to Edward on the subject.

"My dear love," he said, in reply, "I have not overlooked the possible consequences with my father, but I have been silent, as any surmise

that you were not worthy to take rank with the highest, would have been an insult from my lips. Now that you have spoken, I will confess frankly, that I anticipate objections on the part of my father, which I may find it difficult to overcome."

"‘Your mother, sir,’ he wrote to me, when announcing his second marriage, ‘was *only* a banker’s daughter; but I had then political aspirations, and I married her to secure her father’s local influence. Our name commands a higher alliance, and I have therefore united myself to the Lady Clara Normanton.’ Pshaw! My German student life has discouraged the growth of such old world absurdities. I seek for my happiness in virtue, truth, and love, and I have found them in my darling Florence.” He kissed her pretty cheek, and then continued :

“All my life long my father has treated me as some encumbering thing that he was compelled to recognise, and has never endeavoured by act or word to win my affection, or even my esteem. He has doled out to me, as it were, education and main-

tenance, because I am known to be his son, and I have repaid him with obedience, cold obedience. So much for the past. Our accounts are fairly balanced, and there is an end. For the future I will make my own conditions. He has promised to procure me an appointment in India, and he will do it, I am sure, because it will provide for me without encroaching upon his own pocket. Let me have one foot on the ladder, and do not fear but I shall mount, and with such a stimulus to exertion as you will be, dear Florence, I shall ascend more quickly. If my father receive my choice with the honour which is her due, well—we are friends. If he pause in according her one jot of her just right, we part—not enemies, I trust. It will be only to continue our old relations again. No love, no reverence—no sympathy on either side. Your love, dear Florence, will be all-sufficient for me. May I deserve it always.”

Florence rested her head upon his shoulder, and was silent, although, when this matter had been thought over by her, she resolved that

she would urge Edward to consider if the love she had given him was a fair equivalent for the sacrifice he might have to make, and whether he was sure in the time to come, he would never feel regret that he had abandoned so much for her sake. What he had said had made her silent, and she was glad not to have had occasion to urge those questions, for had he answered "No," her heart would have broken.

The family council was satisfied in part with Edward's view of the difficulty, but this dark cloud in the shape of Sir Gilbert Norwold, which would ever and anon cast a passing shadow on their happiness, at last threatened storm and thunder. Sir Gilbert wrote to Edward announcing the receipt of the appointment, and requiring him to return to England in six weeks, and then to be prepared for an early departure for India.

An early departure for India! Florence thought. Away for ever from father, mother, Uncle Jack, even as Edward's wife was a condition which Florence had never realised until that moment. Five thousand miles could not keep her love from

the old home, and thither it went the moment such a separation appeared to be possible. Whenever they had spoken of India, which had been very seldom, it had had no other effect than was produced by the mention of England, London, France! She had never thought otherwise than that she should be with the distant loved ones again, sharing with them the new happiness she had found in her love and its object!

And could she part with him who had created the new life? Could she send him away alone to fight the battle of life, and whose conquests were to be shared by her, knowing how he had reckoned upon her companionship, to sustain him in the struggle?

What was to be the result?

Aunt Letty could not answer her, neither could M. Fichard. They had not contemplated such difficulties—they had imagined that they had only to await letters from Bathurst, never doubting but that the absent authorities would ratify the treaty, and then to abide the usual culmination of such wooings. In a few days the mail

would arrive, but matters would then be no better than they were at present. What was to be done?

Edward—when did a true lover hesitate to cut the Gordian knot, which perplexes and baffles the less interested lookers-on? Edward suggested a bold solution of the difficulty.

“Florence, my beloved,” he said, embracing her slender waist, and pressing her sweet head to his bosom, “I will be your guide from this labyrinth of hopes and fears. To part from each other is impossible. It would be to part from life, for neither could sustain the separation. Such a trial is not demanded of us. In a few days at most we shall have your parents’ approval of our love, and then—and then, dear Florence, let me make you my wife—let us be so united that no one can divide us. We will then go together to your distant home, and you shall justify, if you can, the choice you have made in me.”

This was cutting the knot undoubtedly, and Aunt Letty and M. Fichard were long in debate as to the advisability of permitting it.

Ah! news of the Mail at last!

Aunt Letty trembled as she prepared to read aloud the paragraph in *Galignani* headed—

“*New South Wales—The Mail.*—We regret to record the total loss of the mail-ship *Josephine*, when within two days’ sail of Bathurst. Part of her crew and passengers only were rescued, but none of her mails, and——”

Letty could read no more, as she saw at once that the whole responsibility of Florence’s love-matters rested still with her and her husband.

No reply to their anxious inquiries could be obtained for months, as in Letty’s subsequent letter she had merely expressed a hope that the important news which had reached them by the former mail had been favourably received, and that they should soon have occasion to congratulate each other. Florence had been reticent also, upon the one great subject, and had not even mentioned Edward’s name in any way, fearing to do so, in case an objection had been taken to the engagement which she had formed so unwittingly.

What was to be done? The question pressed.

for a reply, as Edward had received a peremptory call to London, and all the hopes of love seemed imperiled by his departure.

What was to be done?

O! Aunt Letty weak as a kindly woman! O! M. Fichard submissive as a tender easy husband and a benevolent man! O! Edward and Florence, trusting, hopeful, daring as two young loving hearts should be, why do you all wear those wedding garments, and what have two of you vowed to each other in that little chapel of the Avenue Marbeuf, in the Elysian Fields, which never were visited by happier spirits than those which occupy those hackney *voitures* on their way back to the apartments of M. Fichard.

CHAPTER VII.

OLD HAUNTS AND NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

"THE COCK," in Fleet Street, has been sung by Tennyson, and henceforth stands on classic ground. The student in Lemprière knows that the cock was of old dedicated to Esculapius, but the golden bird in Fleet Street more properly belongs to Themis, for on its mahogany shrines, flocks of sheep in the shape of chops and kidneys, herds of bullocks, cut up into large and small steaks and tons of cheese converted into Welsh rarebits, have been offered up time out of mind to that legal deity, whilst libations of stout and every other alcoholic compound have been freely poured down the gullets of his priests and acolytes; as the Temple is on the opposite side of the street, and law, like love, requires to live on something more than the flowers of rhetoric. A long narrow passage brings you at once to a low-

roofed dining-room, divided on each side into boxes supplied with the narrowest of seats and tables, the latter covered not at all times (we write of times past) with the cleanest of table-cloths; and a superstition prevailed formerly—mind formerly—that by removing the crumb-strewn damask and shaking it, the “coming” had lost all traces of “the parting guest!” The spacious fire-grate, amply filled in winter time, gave a cheerful welcome, and on hot summer days, from its capacity for ventilation, combined with the pervading gloom of the place, made the heat more endurable. A young Templar had given his orders—as the phrase runs—and was preparing to wile away the time necessary to execute them, by a perusal of *Crabbe’s Digest*, when his studious intention was interrupted by the entrance into the same box of a *quasi* military person, who with a smile and a bow took his seat composedly.

Having deposited his hat and gloves carefully beside him on the seat, he said, with another smile and a bow—

"Mr. Elliott, I believe?"

"Yes," replied the Templar; "am I known to you?"

"I had the honour," answered the new-comer, "to be subpoenaed—although I was not called—in the case of *Baxter v. Hammerton*, and in which you held a brief as junior."

"O yes," said Elliott—rather flattered to find that in the only case in which he had been engaged he had made such a lasting impression; "I presume you are Captain Elmsley, and had to prove, if I remember rightly, the handwriting of the defendant."

"Such was to have been my evidence; but the other side admitted, and I was spared appearing against an old, although unprincipled friend. Waiter!"

"Coming, sir," replied that functionary, making his exit through a door at the upper end of the room, and bawling at the pitch of his voice, "Two lamb-chops to follow mashed potatoes, pint, steak, very well done!"

"Extraordinary class of persons are waiters,"

said Elmsley, "never can speak the truth, even in their reckoning. Why could not that fellow have said 'Yés, sir—or coming directly, sir,' without adding mendacity to neglect."

" 'Coming,' I presume, is according to waitercraft, and has supplanted the 'Anon, anon, sir,' of the old drawer," replied Elliott.

"Ah, Shakspeare!" said Elmsley, again smiling. "I am glad you are a reader of the immortal Swan! Waiter!"

"Coming, sir."

"When, sir, when?" exclaimed Elmsley, rather testily.

"Beg pardon, captain!" said the waiter, flicking off a few crumbs with his soiled napkin. "What'll you have, sir—chops and steaks, sir—potatoes—no peas, all gone, sir."

"That's provoking," said the captain. "I had fully calculated upon peas—Well! say a small steak—no potatoes, and half a pint of stout."

"Yes, sir," and bawling "Coming," in reply to another summons, the waiter disappeared as before.

"I find it advisable to live sparingly this hot weather," observed Elmsley, "and therefore wander into this locality, as they understand the art of small cookery better here than at the West-end."

To this latter proposition the young Templar agreed, although he had given a more substantial order for his repast than his *vis-à-vis*, and he now proceeded to devote his attention to the materials placed before him.

"Has it been demonstrated ever," said the Captain, giving a hasty glance at Elliott's well cooked chop—"why waiters generally are flat-footed, and wear linen that appears to have been rinsed in pot liquor?"

"I never observed those peculiarities," replied Elliott.

"Do, and you will find my observations are correct," said the Captain. "They also appear to clean the cuffs and lappets of their coats with black-lead, which is not always pleasant to look upon. Why they will not imitate the French *garçon*, with his neat jacket and clean white

apron, is a mystery to me. A very small steak this, Edward, very, and no fat. Find me a piece of fat, and—yes—you *must* bring me potatoes.”

“Yes, sir,” replied the man to whom these latter observations were addressed. “Point steaks are small, sir—Coming! and potatoes directly, sir.”

Elliott began to feel a kindly sympathy for his new acquaintance, suspecting that there were other reasons than the heat of the weather for the limitation he had placed upon his appetite.

“You quoted Shakspeare just now,” said Elmsley, after a short pause.

“I did?” asked Elliott, rather surprised, and then added, “Oh, I remember! master Francis and his anon.”

“Quite enough to show me that you have been a careful reader of the immortal Swan,” said Elmsley. “I, too, am a disciple, and never lose an opportunity of paying my devotions. To-night there is to be a new *Juliet* at “The Lane,” and I shall spare her an hour or two.”

Elliott was relieved at finding the Captain’s

abstemiousness was not enforced, and he finished his dinner more pleasurably than he had begun it.

"I presume you are fond of a play?" said Elmsley, when the waiter, having cleared the cloth, furnished the Captain with a tooth-pick, and Elliott with a glass of hollands, for which The Cock enjoyed a celebrity.

"Yes—I am—very partial to a good play well acted, and I consider I am honestly pursuing my studies when witnessing both," replied Elliott.

"May I venture to offer you the opportunity of doing so this evening?" said Elmsley. "I am a friend of Elliston, and he has kindly sent me an order for two to the boxes."

Elliott was convinced that his former conjecture respecting his new friend's limited dinner was the correct one, and he had not the heart to refuse the acceptance of the proposal, resolving to acquit himself of the obligation by asking the Captain to supper. It was not a wise thing, certainly, to take up so readily with a tavern acquaintance, although he had appeared in a brief, but there was an independence about the

man's poverty, and a certain gentlemanly bearing, which disarmed suspicion. The waiter evidently knew him, and though he was only a poor customer, treated him with a respectful deference, which one of that knowing order of men would not have accorded to a questionable visitor.

Having discharged their reckoning (which, to the honour of Edward, the waiter, was scrupulously correct, so far as Elmsley was concerned, however seventeen-pence might have been transmitted into one shilling and seven-pence, in the computation of Elliott's account of sundries) the Captain and the Templar—the Sword and the Gown, proceeded on their way to Drury Lane.

Captain Elmsley was evidently well-known to the officials in the front of the theatre, as his order was not examined, and might have been a piece of waste paper for what care they took to examine it. The box-keeper knew him, also, and passed him in the lobby, with a slight bow of recognition, and the assurance that every place was let.

“We must give these fellows a shilling, I

suppose," said Elmsley, proceeding to unhook his frock coat very deliberately. "'They must make profit of their place,' as Ben Jonson says."

"Oh, that must be with me, Captain! if you please," said Elliott, and a shrug of remonstrance was the reply.

"Jones—here Jones!" cried Elmsley, rather authoritatively to one of the box-keepers, after this considerate offer of the Templar, "Two good places, mind—my friend wants a bill."

Jones understood the Captain. The box-list was examined, and by great good luck two places on the front row, in the bend of the house, were found to be vacant.

Ah, those were playhouse times, when our grand old drama was not too slow for the lovers of good acting, and which will survive the neglect of the present, as it has done that of the past. When "the play was the thing" for which men and women fought, struggled, and endured, under the old Piazza of Covent Garden or the less commodious entrances of Drury Lane, good-

naturedly for hours, undeterred by the well remembered cry of, "Take care of your pockets, Ladies and Gentlemen."

A good seat in the pit was worth contending for, when Kean, Kemble, O'Neil, Young, Munden, Elliston, Dowton, Liston, and many others, now in the land of shadows, were to awaken tears or laughter, both excellent soothers of the real sorrows and carking cares, which have so large a share in the life of man.

We will leave Elmsley, to observe and criticise the new Juliet, as the Templar had found "metal more attractive" to occupy his attention in the centre compartment of the dress circle.

The object which so fascinated him, was a young girl, about twenty, whose beautiful face showed the deep sympathy she had in the mimic scenes she was witnessing. Her features were regular and expressive, and her full dark eyes showed in their tears or laughter the ready susceptibility of her nature. She was dressed in slight mourning, which contrasted favourably with the gaudier attire of the two elderly ladies

circle, and as they prepared to leave the theatre without waiting for the farce, he proposed to Elmsley to depart also.

"Certainly, certainly!" said the Captain. "The farce is nothing without Liston, and he, you know, is at the other house. I saw it on the first night, and' believed it would have been damned but for the exertions of myself and umbrella. A judiciously applied umbrella has saved many a dramatic trifle. Like the bell-wether in a flock of sheep, your umbrella can very often lead the ignorant or doubting public the way they should go. What a night! Why, it is raining a deluge."

Elliott, calling one of the watermen to him, slipped a shilling into his hand, and bade him secure the only disengaged hackney coach, in the fond expectation that the three ladies following him down the stairs, might be without a carriage. His boldness was rewarded, as the two elderlings began to lament their situation, and wondered how they should ever reach Billiter Square.

Almost before Elmsley could realise what was in progress, Elliott had politely placed his coach at the service of the ladies, and in the most respectful manner handed the yellow turban into the creaking vehicle, and though the young lady stiffly declined his attention, he extended the same civility to the mummy with the crop.

"How shall we get away from here?" said Elliott to Elmsley, when the coach had been driven away. "I want you to be my guest at supper somewhere, but there is no facing this rain."

"I know of an odd place close at hand," said Elmsley, "if you are not very particular; and I think you will be amused if you have never been at The Lyre."

"I have never been there, although I have heard of the place," replied Elliott. "How can we get there?"

"Follow me," said Elmsley, turning back into the theatre, and passing through a sort of corridor known little to the public, they were soon at one of the pit entrances which faced the hostelry he had mentioned. Then crossing the

road they passed through the bar of the house, and entered a room at the back. It was not very large, but its decorations were remarkable. It was divided by partitions into four compartments, or wards, as they were designated, Elmsley told Elliott, at the same time directing his attention to the paintings which distinguished one box from the other.

JUNIPER WARD was set apart for the neophytes of the Lyre, and the design upon the wall represented, somewhat after the manner of Hogarth, the gin-drinker's career in all its painful gradations.

The next compartment was called appropriately POVERTY WARD, and the picture which distinguished it was illustrative of the miseries of penury produced by an indulgence in drink.

The grimness of the ornamentation increased as the frequenter of this strange place graduated higher or lower, and the next division was named INSANITY WARD, with its appropriate illustrations, coarsely, but truthfully rendered.

The last compartment was inscribed SUICIDE

WARD, and the incidents pertaining to that sad termination of many a misspent life were faithfully depicted.

"And is this place devoted to social enjoyment?" asked Elliott, in surprise. "It seems better calculated to frighten men into abstinence and the doldrums. It is a sort of public-house 'La Trappe.'"

"It was the strange fancy of a poor lost scene-painter to decorate this room as you now see it," said Elmsley, in reply, "in the belief, perhaps, that others might be deterred by these grim pictures from pursuing a course which he himself could not abandon. Poor fellow! he laboured in vain. It is now more frequented than ever, after the theatres are over, by certain actors and their friends, who are given to late hours and potations 'pottle deep.' See, there is some one asleep Poverty Ward." As he spoke, a shrunk pale-faced man, dressed in a drab overcoat, although it was summer time, roused himself from his uneasy slumber, and regarding Elmsley for a few moments with his large

staring eyes, said in the intervals of a racking cough :

“ Ha, Captain Elmsley ! why you are quite a stranger here ? ”

“ Good gracious ! ” cried Elmsley, involuntarily, as he recognised the man. “ Why, you are Mr. Brownley ? ”

“ Yes, ” answered the man, “ jolly Tom Brownley, but changed a good deal for the worse, owing to this infernal cough. ”

As the paroxysm which succeeded this brief response lasted some time, Elmsley whispered to Elliott : “ As fine a fellow as you ever saw twelve months ago. Sang a capital song, too, poor fellow ! ”

As soon as Brownley could speak again, he said, “ I can’t master this torment sometimes—hot rum-and-water only keeps it quiet—and the landlord here is an ungrateful brute—quite forgetting the pounds I have spent, and the pounds I have brought him for years past. ”

As the man said this, Elmsley had unhooked the front of his coat, and taking a shilling from

his waistcoat pocket—after directing Elliott's attention to one of the pictures on the wall—quietly slipped the money into Brownley's hand, motioning him to silence.

The man nodded his thanks, and instantly summoning the waiter, threw, with an air of offended dignity, the money upon the table, and ordered the stimulant he required, and then coughed again. As soon as he received the liquor, he contrived, steaming as it was, to swallow it off in two or three gulps, immediately dispatching the waiter for another supply, and then was penniless again. The next glass he husbanded with more care, and the effect was such as he had asserted it would be, as he was able to talk with much less interruption.

"Why, Captain, it is many years now since we first met in this room. Ten, or more. We were made Buffaloes on the same night, if you remember.

'Through the wild woods we'll wander,
And chase the buffalo.'"

His effort to sing this couplet brought a return

of the cough, and during its continuance, Elmsley informed Elliott that the Ancient Order of Buffaloes was a club organised for the purposes of good fellowship and late hours, more to his shame to acknowledge it.

"Ah!" said Brownley, when he had recovered, "my singing days are over for the present, that's certain. I must keep quiet until I can get rid of this troublesome complaint. Unless it masters me as one did poor Bill Basely. You remember him? A stout, jolly fellow, that used to sit in JUNIPER WARD long after he had come to POVERTY."

"Yes, I remember him very well. I saw him when I was here last. And so he is dead?" said Elmsley.

"Yes, Captain, he died from drinking—wasted away to a shadow," answered Brownley.

"There was a friend of his a capital storyteller—Mr. Grayson—where is he?"

"Grayson! Oh! he's dead likewise. He died from drinking. Very sudden death his was," replied Brownley.

"There was a comic actor who came here sometimes," said Elmsley, thinking to get a more pleasant account of his old friends; "he gave promise to become a metropolitan. Where is he now?"

"He's with the others we have mentioned," answered Brownley. "He came to London, and played one or two short engagements; but Juniper Ward did for him. He got into yours," pointing to Insanity Ward, wherein Elliott and Elmsley were seated, "and there he died. He brought it on by drinking."

The cough again intervened, and Elliott said :

"Let us hasten our supper, Elmsley; for I really feel as if we were in a charnel-house, and your friend there were the sexton. If you think more drink will do him no injury, let me order him some, for that cough is terrible."

"He is past further injury, I fancy," said Elmsley, so when the waiter brought their supper of broiled kidneys, Mr. Brownley was prescribed the mixture as before. The effect produced upon the man was surprising when he had drunk again,

and his figure, hitherto shrunken, as we have said, expanded, and he appeared the wreck of the fine fellow Elmsley had described him to have been.

"If I could only get some employment," said Brownley, "and earn money enough to buy medicine—for this is medicine to me—I should get round again, I am certain. Well! enough of my complaints, and don't let me spoil your supper. No, thank you. I couldn't eat now if I had turtle and venison. By the bye! we shall have a full room presently. Rupert has promised to come to-night."

"Indeed!" said Elmsley. "I have not seen him, except on the stage, for these two years."

The person thus familiarly spoken of by Brownley was a popular actor of the day, and who, unfortunately, forgot what was due to his position, and indulged too freely the vices and the virtues of a liberal disposition. It is lifting no veil from the memory of any dead prototype of Rupert Merville to narrate what follows, as similar examples of prodigality and folly were too com-

mon at The Lyre; and the renewal of his acquaintance with Elmsley is necessary to our story. Elliott had often seen and admired Merville on the stage, and the desire to meet him overcame his objection to the place, which was now beginning to fill, as actors and their friends, released from other duties, came in, seating themselves indiscriminately in any of the wards which suited their fancy. The conversation turned chiefly upon the new Juliet, and Elmsley, who seemed to be known to most of the actors, spoke in terms of approval, which he occasionally asked Elliott to confirm. The young Templar had very confused notions of what he had been supposed to have seen, and he confined his criticism to mere exclamations. "Oh! certainly! very good in parts—very good, and gives promise."

Rupert Merville at length entered the room, and was received with rapping of tables, jingling of glasses, and vociferous demonstrations of welcome. When this clamour had subsided, a gentleman in Poverty Ward rose up, and holding his glass above his head, said :

"Welcome to Elsinore!"

"Bob Bentley, or I do forget myself?" replied Merville, adopting the "humour" of the moment.

"The same my lord, and your *poor* servant ever," replied Mr. Bentley, emphasising the word *poor* rather too strongly for perfect elocution.

"And what brings you from Whitstable!" asked Merville, "as I saw your name in the bills."

"A truant disposition, good my lord; and the bursting up of the concern. The ghost did not walk for three consecutive weeks."

A laugh followed this statement. Actors are prone to laugh at the misfortunes of themselves and other poor fellows: they are wise in doing so, as they have plenty of them, and the non-appearance of the ghost, Elmsley explained to Elliott, signified that the treasury of the theatre had not been opened during the time specified.

Rupert Merville having taken a seat set apart for him, rang the bell, and a waiter entered.

"Ah! Tom," said the great actor, in a pleasant

tone of recognition, "I am glad to see you here still."

Tom ducked and rubbed his bald head—not bald from years—and thanked Mr. Merville for his kindness.

"There is a sovereign, Tom. Bring in twenty glasses of brandy-and-water—ten hot—ten cold," said Merville, and his speech was received with "*Cheers*" from all parts of the room.

"Yes, sir; twenty glasses of brandy-and-water—ten hot—ten cold. Yes, sir; but David will take the money. David is head-waiter."

"Why not you, Tom? You have been here long enough," said the kindly actor.

"Bad chalk-head, sir. Haven't got a chalk-head, and can't keep score," replied Tom, hurrying out of the room, being conscious that delay would subject him to what he described as "bushels of chaff, and a peck of personalities."

Merville's order was well understood at The Lyre, and very soon the landlord, attended by two waiters, appeared, carrying trays of glasses, containing brandy-and-water, some steaming,

some cold, and then ranged them in rows on the mantel-piece.

It was understood that those who chose to avail themselves of the privilege were welcome to help themselves; and the quickness with which the mantel-piece was cleared, proved how well the hospitable intention of Merville was estimated. The conversation now became general, the subjects being universally professional, and, in a great part, unintelligible to Elliott, who was surprised at the interest they excited in the other auditors.

Some time elapsed before Merville recognised Elmsley, and then he instantly rose and came towards him. The other rose also to meet him, and they shook hands most cordially, Merville apologising for not having observed him when he came into the room, excusing himself as being near-sighted. Before Merville resumed his seat, he said:

“Gentlemen, do me the favour to drink the health of my old friend, Captain Elmsley; for when I was a poor actor in the country, he

generously lent me a guinea, much to the relief of an excellent landlady and myself. Captain Elmsley's health!"

The toast met with a hearty response; and Elmsley, in reply, assured every one that the circumstance had been forgotten by him, as the money had been honourably returned; and he was under so many obligations to actors, for the pleasure he had derived from their talent, not to say anything about their "orders" (every one laughed at this), that he was happy to have been of the least service to one so distinguished as Mr. Merville. Such a neat and appropriate speech was honoured, as it deserved to be, by a spontaneous chorus of "He's a jolly good fellow," and which nobody did deny.

The spirit of harmony thus awakened was not to be put to sleep again; and Rupert Merville set a good example, by singing, in a clear, sweet voice, the once popular ballad of "Sally in our Alley."

Of course, his health was drunk, and toasted in a relay of twenty more glasses of brandy-

and-water, provided from the same open purse. Other songs succeeded; and Elliott intimated to Elmsley his desire to leave. The Captain assured him he had only waited his pleasure, and the two rose to depart. Merville would not let them go without again rising to shake the Captain by the hand; but, as he crossed the room, his step was unsteady, and his bright eagle eye appeared to be clouded by the depth and strength of his potations.

“Good night, gentlemen,” he said; and then, addressing Elmsley individually, added: “I hope, my kind friend, that you will make use of me on all occasions when I can be of service, and you shall find, I promise you, that want of gratitude, or forgetfulness of past kindness, are not among the [feelings of Rupert Merville. Bless you, old boy!”

The day was to come when Elmsley would remind him of this promise, and find that he had spoken truly.

The two new friends parted at the door of The Lyre. Elliott, after thanking the Captain for his

novel evening's amusement, went off to his chambers in the Temple, and Elmsley to his home—where? Few knew beside himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

EDWARD NORWOLD GOES IN SEARCH OF A HOME.

BEFORE the happy honeymoon of Edward and Florence Norwold had waned, Aunt Letty and her husband, M. Fichard, left to themselves, without their tenderest sympathies being excited by their daily intercourse with the two loving beings whom the Church had made one, began to see more clearly the consequences likely to arise from this unauthorised marriage. Aunt Letty had endeavoured, more than once or twice, to write to her sister ; but the confession, as it were, which she had to make, appeared so formidable upon paper, that she laid down her pen in consternation at the act which she had not only sanctioned, but actually counselled. In this dilemma she resolved to avail herself of her conubial privileges, and transferred the burthen of revelation to the shoulders of her helpmate,

M. Fichard, and succeeded, though not without the exercise of all her womanly arts of persuasion, in obtaining an unwilling compliance. M. Fichard found an equal difficulty in communicating the events which had taken place, and it was not until he had consumed nearly a quire of paper in unsatisfactory attempts, that he resolved on adopting the briefest form possible to announce the fact of the marriage, leaving their distant relatives to take what view they pleased of the part he and his wife had had in the matter. M. Fichard was less concerned than he would otherwise have been, had he not succeeded in obtaining a snug government post in Algérie, where he would be out of the reach of any personal reproaches with which Uncle Jack or Mr. Warner might feel disposed to visit him, as, long before either could reach Europe, he would have wound up his affairs in Paris, and be installed in his new home. Aunt Letty, always fond of variety, was rejoiced at the change of position, and, contenting herself with the assurance that they had all acted for what they believed to be the best, soon became in-

different to the effect of her husband's communication. There was one trifling error in M. Fichard's letter, and which Letty detected when the rough draft was shown to her, a few days after the departure of the mail. M. Fichard, in his brief statement of what had occurred, always spoke of M. Edward, and had omitted entirely the name of Norwold. He was a stupid pig, no doubt, as he said he was, for such an omission; but what was to be done? Nothing! They had been foolish throughout the business, and this last act was only a continuation of their folly. Why had they consented to the marriage? Why had they acceded to Florence's entreaties that they should communicate its occurrence, and not have left the task to her, or to M. Edward—that is, to M. Norwold? Bah! They had both been pigs, no doubt of that.

The time arrived when Edward and his new wife must proceed to England, unless he was prepared to abandon the appointment and trust to his own resources. What were they? None; truly none! M. Fichard therefore advised and

entreated him to go to England, and accept the appointment—and so it was determined. When the time of parting came, Florence felt that she was separating from true, kind, and loving friends. M. Fichard generously supplied many things more or less useful in her new state, and Aunt Letty gave Edward an introduction to one of her oldest friends in London, and thither the young couple repaired on their arrival in England. In a few days they had lodgings of their own, and Florence realised more and more the isolation of her position, which would have been painful had she not possessed the fullest trust in him who was her husband.

How much was comprised in that single word, husband! The arbiter of all her future life, decreeing that each coming day should bring the renewal of affection, peace, contentment, or converting all succeeding years into sorrowing for the love that was dead, and for the dazzling hopes changed into dark regrets. She never doubted what he would prove to her, and in that unswerving faith she found her happi-

ness; for she was largely happy, and would be entirely so, when her beloved parents and her dear Uncle Jack again held her to their hearts, and gave her, and her other soul, their blessing.

When Edward Norwold stood in the presence of his father—his cold, unloving father—he felt how difficult was the task he had to perform—how almost hopeless the expectation of any kindly result arising from it. He had been met with a formal greeting that chilled the blood in his veins, and made his heart almost pulseless. His lady mother-in-law, whom he had not seen before, received him far more kindly, and simulated, if she did not feel, a pleasurable interest on his return to his family.

“You have been a truant too much, Mr. Norwold,” she said, “and we must make home so pleasant to you, that you will not indulge in such long absences again.”

As though he had been allowed any choice in the time past, poor fellow!

Edward thanked her briefly, as his father's

coldness and the thoughts which had arisen consequent upon it, made the utterance of common-place difficult.

"I trust I may dispense with all formalities and call you Edward," said Lady Norwold, after a pause; "and that you will call me Mamma. I should be quite proud of such a son."

"Oh, certainly," he replied; but he felt his reverence for the memory of the one whom he had called by that sacred name, often in his dreams, would render compliance with the last request impossible.

"You must be introduced to my little fellows," said her ladyship, ringing the bell. "I hope you will not consider them as intruders in this illustrious family. Let Master Horace and Master Gilbert come to me," addressing the servant who had answered the bell. "They are boisterous monkeys, as you may know by the noise they are now making, but their nurse spoils them."

Two fine, handsome boys ran, laughing, into the room, but paused in their merriment when

they saw Sir Gilbert was in the room reading the newspaper.

"Come here, my dears, and let me introduce you to your elder—brother may I say? Your elder brother, Edward, whom you must love very much and always obey."

Edward felt strangely as he took first one and then the other of the boys upon his knee and kissed him. "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin," and as in their veins his own ancestral blood was mingled, they soon found a place in the young man's heart. The sooner, as he saw that they had less than was their right in the heart of their father, for he rose and left the room without exchanging an embrace or a word with the little fellows.

When the evil influence had departed, the restraint of the children vanished also, and they soon made a confidant of Edward as to their horses and carts, and drums and guns, up-stairs in the nursery.

"Brother Edward will be shocked to hear that we do nothing but play in this said nursery,"

said Lady Norwold, "and that Horace, who is more than five years old, spells cat with a k; and that Gilbert, who was fourth last birthday, has only just made acquaintance with big A and bouncing B."

The two dunces were not in the least abashed at this denouncement of their ignorance, but looked up into Edward's face with sparkling eyes and smiling lips. Edward could only smile in return, and express his conviction that, some day or other, they would be bright men and Lord Chancellors.

"We are going to make a beginning very shortly, when I can find a governess to my satisfaction," said her ladyship, "and then they will be good boys, and learn to read about 'Jack the Giant Killer,' and all the other heroes of the story-books. Now, my dears, go back to your nurse."

Edward had made himself so agreeable to his little relatives that compliance with this request was disputed, and submission only accorded on the promise of receiving a Big Box of Bricks that very afternoon.

“ We have a little dinner to-morrow, Edward, which I have arranged, so as to introduce you to our most intimate friends, and make you some society. On Tuesday, in the next week, we shall have an evening party, when you may extend your acquaintance if you desire to do so. I will now show you your rooms, which I have had arranged under my own superintendence, and I hope you will find all to your wish; if not, pray name it to me or to the house-keeper.”

Lady Norwold rose, and her fine stately figure showed to advantage as she walked across the drawing-room wherein this conversation had occurred, and the side-glance or two which she cast at herself in the great looking-glasses, was evidence enough that she was not unconscious of her personal endowments. She was ten years younger than Sir Gilbert, and had succeeded, since her marriage, very unexpectedly, to a legacy of nearly three thousand a-year, and the scandal-mongers of her set did not hesitate to declare that, had she anticipated this windfall would

have tumbled into her lap, Sir Gilbert would have wooed in vain.

It was his wife's accession to this large income that made Sir Gilbert desirous to recover the Baronetcy dormant since his father's death, and which he succeeded in obtaining by a rather strong affidavit of Jasper Jellifer, in which the death of Gerard appeared to be more than problematical. Her ladyship now led the way to two rooms on the second floor of the mansion—one appropriated to a bedroom, with a dressing-closet adjoining, and the other to a snug bachelor sitting-room opening on to a lead flat, and commanding a view of St. James's Park.

"I have placed you here, Edward," said Lady Norwold, "so that you might take advantage of this outlet, to indulge at your ease your continental habit of smoking, as Sir Gilbert *affects* to be disturbed by it, and we never disoblige him if we can help it." There was a slight change in her ladyship's tone as she said this, which made Edward conclude, that his noble father was not the most agreeable of husbands; and he there-

fore was touched the more by the anxiety displayed for his comfort, as it appeared that his lady mother was desirous to compensate by her own attention for the indifference of Sir Gilbert. He thanked her very heartily, and expressed his satisfaction at all which had been done for him.

“The adjoining room I shall presently appropriate to the boys and their governess, and as they will only occupy it during the hours of study, you will not be disturbed by them unless you are too good-natured, and encourage them to be riotous. Poor little fellows! they have not much gentleman’s society—and boys, I have observed, always prefer it to that of ladies.”

“Until they come to years of discretion,” said Edward, “and then—”

“They laugh at their former teachers,” said Lady Norwold, “and make fools or slaves of them, if they can. I hope my sex will find a kinder friend in you than others have done in some of your name”—adding, after a slight pause—“that is, if report may be trusted, which it may not. You had better order your

luggage to be sent home at once, as we dine at seven."

Edward had thought of Florence a hundred times during this interview with Lady Norwold, and wondered when the necessity for leaving her would become imperative; but he had not anticipated such an immediate desertion.

"I will not occupy these charming rooms just at present," he said, "as I have promised a friend, who accompanied me from France, to stay a few days, and—"

"Oh! pray excuse yourself to your friend," Lady Norwold said, earnestly; "you had better do so, I assure you. Sir Gilbert will expect you at dinner I am certain; and it may be as well to consult his wishes, as he goes to Homburg either to-morrow or the day after, or the day after that—I know not which—and until he departs, I would advise you to place yourself at his disposal."

Edward was little inclined to yield anything to please this exacting unamiable father, but Lady Norwold continued, in a tone of entreaty: "To

oblige me I am sure you will not disturb the serenity of your 'papa ;" and so he promised to dine with them, stipulating to return to his friend afterwards.

Edward, as he walked to the house where Florence was staying, reflected upon the difficulties of his position, and saw how impossible it would be for him to refuse residence in his father's house, without creating suspicion of some strong motive for so doing ; and when he had related to Florence all that had passed, she also acknowledged that the course of their true love was getting among rocks, and was ceasing to run smoothly as it had done hitherto. It seemed so strange to separate at the hour when they had been most together ; that he should be going to a home which was not her home also ; and that friends were waiting to receive him and give him welcome, who would, it was surmised, refuse her admittance to their ranks, even when presented as his wife, his loved, his honoured wife. Both had these thoughts, though when he kissed her, and bade her adieu ! she smiled as though her

heart was full of joy—and not of her first wedded sorrow, which spent itself in tears when he was gone. She chided herself for this weakness, and then endeavoured to reason herself into endurance, knowing, as she thought, that the time must come when they should be apart for days and weeks, perhaps ; and as her parents had been when her father was striving to make a home for them at Bathurst, and in the Bush. She would school herself to bear these separations as her noble mother had borne them ; but then, this was her first experience, and it was not altogether free from mortifying accessories.

Edward returned thoughtful and depressed. His father had obtained an exchange of appointments, to his advantage it was considered, but it delayed his emancipation from his present thralldom for five or six months. At first, Edward was glad of the postponement, as he had hoped to make Lady Norwold a friend, and, perhaps, an intercessor with his father. But as he walked homeward to his lodgings, he had seen that the delay increased the danger of discovery ; and that

in his anger his father might cast him off at once, and for ever. Further reflection had shown him how few outlets there are into the world of honourable labour for the gentleman and scholar only; and though genius will pluck its reward sooner or later, honest mediocrity too often perishes in the struggle—the annoyance of failure increased by witnessing the success of the lucky empiric, or the subservient knave. Had he stood alone, the chances might have been risked; but now that the dearest fate on earth was united with his own, he was bound to accept—nay, to secure, if it were possible, the legitimate advantage which would arise from keeping on terms with his father. Florence agreed with him in all that he had thought and told her: and having much of her mother's hopeful nature, she bade him look the present boldly in the face, and trust to God to direct him in the future.

The next day was the little dinner of which Lady Norwold had spoken. It was limited to twelve persons, all the best of the Norwold set, and aristocratic, exceedingly. Edward was re-

ceived with the kindness and amenities pertaining to good breeding, and was surprised to find how so many persons bent upon their own selfish enjoyment could manage to fulfil the business of their lives, and be so agreeable to each other.

Lady Norwold strove earnestly to bring out her young relative; and if the interest which all professed to feel in his welfare was sincere, she had succeeded in making for him many earnest friends.

Will he ever learn the truth of their professions? and if so, will he find that the earth "hath bubbles as the water hath?"

Florence was delighted to hear how Edward had been received, and forgot all the lonely minutes she had passed in that strange room, which became, hour by hour, less like home when he was absent. They both, poor worldlings, believed that they had now a host of friends, and that in the event of Sir Gilbert proving the stern and cruel father they expected to find him, there might be some door opening a way to independence, and whose golden key was in the

keeping of one of the new friends who had professed so much interest for the young cadet of the house of Norwold. Go sleep, and dream the brightest of visions—fond, loving, trusting pair, until an unkind hand awakens you !

The next day Edward had an appointment with his father, and the interview was, like all that had preceded it, productive of no kindly feeling in the breast of either parent or son. Edward learned that his father was going to Homburg for his health's sake, and that during his absence he required Edward to be in attendance upon Lady Norwold, and to occupy the rooms set apart for him.

Edward was to be prepared to leave England on Sir Gilbert's return from Germany, and until that period an allowance should be made to him in accordance with his proper requirements. That was all. Good bye.

Edward's spirit rose in rebellion, and it was only by great effort that he did not resent the manner in which these favours were doled out, as though to a bedesman and not to a deserving son.

Edward carried home this heavy news to Florence; and who will wonder that she had no word of comfort ready at her lips, but that silently she laid her head upon her husband's breast and wept bitterly?

The morning brought no alleviation of Edward's perplexities, and he was almost prepared to abandon his determination to await the course of events and at once to learn the worst.

Not so Florence. Her woman's wit had discovered, she believed, an escape from some of the embarrassments which beset them; and as Edward stood despondingly, prepared to make confession and take a formal farewell of his father, she said:

"I have thought, my darling, how some of this painful trial may be avoided, and if you will think over what I am about to say, and approve of what I am about to suggest, I think you will return to me with a lighter heart and a less gloomy face. Lady Norwold, you tell me, is a kind gentlewoman, and has shown herself mindful of your peculiar position, and it is therefore right

to infer that she would be considerate to any other who might be under her control, although that other might be only—" she paused and looked in his face for a moment, smiling so lovingly, so hopefully—"might be only the governess of her children."

Edward started at the suggestion, but she laid her finger upon his lips, and continued :—

"I could undertake such a charge, and so the same roof would cover us, and we should be near each other and ready to go forth or to remain as your father should elect hereafter. Do not dismiss this proposal without consideration, but think it over until you come back to me, and as you decide, so we will act, dear husband."

He could not have replied to her, had she not uttered this injunction to silence, for his heart was too full for words ; and pressing her to his bosom and kissing her fervently, he left her with a smiling face and tearful eyes.

As he walked along he pondered over what Florence had said, and the scheme of his clever, loving wife took form and substance in his mind,

and ceased to be the shadowy thing it had seemed at first.

Why should she not assume this charge which appeared created on purpose to alleviate the most painful condition of their position? Lady Norwold would obtain an opportunity of knowing her, and how worthy she was of all love and honour, and when the hour of trial came she could the better plead for a recognition of her virtues, and obtain for her that place which she had a right to claim as his wife, and as due to her own unquestionable merits. Yes, it was an inspiration which had suggested this course of action, and it must not be rejected.

This special pleading satisfied all his doubts, and he entered his father's house with a lighter heart than he had ever done before. He found everything prepared for Sir Gilbert's departure, and was witness to an outburst of temper occasioned by some overt act of one of the servants, which spoke well for the stamina of the invalid, who was about to seek the restorative air of the baths at Homburg. In what consisted the ailments of

Sir Gilbert no one appeared to have discovered, for beyond his habitual moroseness and irritability, he seemed to have the full enjoyment of all his functions. He could have enlightened the world had he been so disposed. Nearly three hundred years ago the mighty mind which had searched into the heart of all nature, had declared that none could minister to that disease which Sir Gilbert Norwold was destined to carry with him to his grave !

When Edward returned home, he told Florence the reasoning to which he had subjected her proposals, and the conclusion at which he had arrived. She had not doubted but he would do so, she said, and therefore she had written to her Aunt Letty, entreating her to provide her from among her London friends the necessary references and recommendations, should they be required.

It was well that she had been thus thoughtful, for Lady Norwold had only waited Sir Gilbert's departure to carry her plan into execution, and having mentioned her intention to many per-

sons, she was not surprised to receive an application from a stranger soliciting an interview, and enclosing a letter from Aunt Letty, and a list of references of good respectability. The interview was granted, and the impression made by Miss Florence Warner was so satisfactory, that after due inquiry she was entrusted with the important duty of instructing the two little rebels of Lady Norwold in the first rudiments of education.

This reads sadly like romance, but our lives are all made up of such unlooked-for events,—as we should know did we examine every incident of our daily life, and note how strange and inexplicable most of them have been.

CHAPTER IX.

EDWARD NORWOLD ACKNOWLEDGES HIS MARRIAGE, AND CONTINUES TO SEEK A HOME.

THERE was enough of deception in the notable scheme of Florence to make it dangerous and not altogether satisfactory to those concerned in its development. As these convictions acquired strength in the minds of both Edward and Florence, they almost regretted not having borne their separation patiently, rather than have earned for themselves the self-reproach which occasionally oppressed them. It was true, also, that though they resided beneath the same roof, their relative positions kept them almost entirely apart, and Edward had occasionally to witness the small humiliations to which Florence was exposed, as Lady Norwold, with the good-nature of her class, possessed also much of its selfishness and disregard for the feelings of dependants.

Edward's opportunities of meeting and conversing with Florence were restricted almost entirely to the early morning in the library, and then those interviews had to be most guarded to escape the prying eyes and sensitive ears of the domestics. Careful as they had been, they were not quite as successful as they had hoped, for love, like the violet, is betrayed by its own sweetness; and their bearing towards each other had been discussed more than once at the servants' table.

The governess in a large family occupies an ambiguous position, unless her honourable service is carefully recognised by the heads of the house, and she is received with the equality to which she is entitled on every consideration except her comparative poverty. When her duties are otherwise regarded, and she is received and cared for rather as an upper servant than the trusted guardian of our children, to whom is transferred a mother's privilege to form the infant minds of those so very dear to us, the ignorant and conceited persons whose low minds are clothed in

livery, are always glad to ignore the distinction between themselves and the one of gentle nurture whose mission has come to be among the holiest in the whole range of womanly duties.

Lady Norwold was too busy with the world and her own pleasures to give much thought to the comfort of her governess, whom she had engaged to relieve herself of her maternal anxieties, and considered her acknowledgments made by the liberal terms of their contract. Encouraged by her treatment of Miss Warner, the servants were not too respectful in their conduct towards her, and their occasional impertinence, combined with Florence's own consciousness of wrong done to her absent parents, caused her many, many sorrowful moments.

Six weary weeks had passed away, and Sir Gilbert was expected to return daily. Florence had been out for an early walk with the children, and was returning homeward, as Gregory, Sir John's footman, was indulging in a chat with the under-butler at the next house.

"You seem to have been going it lately at

your house, Mr. Gregory; three 'evenings' and four dinner-parties in six weeks is pretty well, I think," said the under-butler.

"Why, yes, Mr. Hoggings," replied the footman. "Her ladyship has made the most of her time since Sir John's been at 'Omburgh. I shouldn't stand it much longer, I can tell you. I shall have a *quid per quod* or give warning, unless we have a dickey put to our carriage, for I'm regularly spiling my ankles. My calves is a hinch less since I jined this family."

"I must say," remarked the under-butler, "that you are hard worked, and no mistake. Fortune must have given Lady Norwold the picking of her plate-chest, and a precious large spoon she selected."

"Why, yes, we are dusty, I believe; and so we ought to be," replied Gregory; "for I see her ladyship drop a trifle or two, I can tell you, at cards lately."

"Plays, does she?" asked the under-butler. "I hate gaming in a family. Not that people hasn't a right to ruin themselves if they pleases;

but gamin's no good to us, as there's no discount to be got off debts of honour as they call 'em. Ain't that your governess a-coming? Miss What's-her-name?"

"Miss, indeed!" said Gregory, with a sneer. "I do 'ate governesses from my 'cart, that's the fact. Miss, indeed! They ain't better paid than we are, and they don't call us misters."

Florence and the boys had reached the house, and were waiting for admittance, as Gregory continued, in a low whisper—but the words reached her ear—

"If I ain't mistook in my hobsevation, Mr. Hoggings, our youngster, Mr. Edward, has a 'ankering in that quarter."

The door opened, and Florence nearly fainted as she crossed the hall, but the children scampering up-stairs allowed her to enter the library and recover herself.

Edward had been watching for her return, and hearing the boys pass to the nursery, immediately sought the old trysting-place, the library, and found Florence in tears.

Instinctively he embraced her, unmindful and regardless of observation, and pressed to know the cause of her distress. Florence told him briefly what she had heard, and for a moment he was angry at the fellow's impertinence; but, seeking to sooth her, he said:

"What matters what such a brute as that imagines? A few days more, and I will make my father acquainted with our marriage. What does it signify what such a fellow thinks of us?"

"To you nothing, dear husband," replied Florence. "To me it has the painfulness of shame, almost. A woman's honour is like a polished glass—an infant's breath can cloud it."

Edward entreated her to dismiss the doubt that any thought unworthily of her—even the fellow whose coarse words had given her so much pain.

As further conversation might be fatal to the scheme for which they had endured so much, Florence promised to think no more of what Gregory had said, but to wait patiently, cheer-

fully through the few days which intervened between them and the knowledge of their fate.

Sir Gilbert had returned, as had been expected; and the next morning, when Lady Norwold, accompanied by Florence and the two boys, entered the breakfast-room, they found him engaged in the study of a small volume neatly bound in Russia leather, and which her ladyship shrewdly guessed was his banker's book. Sir Gilbert closed the volume, placing it beside him on the table; and then coldly kissed the two children, as though he had not been absent from them an hour.

Her ladyship was evidently mortified at his indifference, but contented herself with inquiring for the morning paper, adding, "That will do, my dears; I will send for you again by-and-by."

The boys appeared glad to escape, as they almost ran out of the room, followed by Florence, to whom Sir Gilbert had accorded only the most solemn of bows.

Edward had, as usual, breakfasted in his own

room, and Florence went to the library, expecting to find him there. She was disappointed, as Mr. Gregory was seated in one of the reading chairs, occupying himself with the newspaper, which James, her ladyship's footman, had just declared not to have arrived.

"Are you aware, Gregory," said Florence, anxious to send him from the room, "that her ladyship has inquired for the newspaper?"

"Yes, Miss," replied the fellow, continuing his reading.

"And is it not your duty to take it to her?" asked Florence.

"No, Miss; I am Sir John's footman, and have nothing to do with my lady," answered Gregory, impudently.

"I think her ladyship would entertain a different opinion, were she acquainted with your present behaviour."

"Will you tell her ladyship, Miss," asked Gregory, rising.

"I am no tale-bearer," answered Florence, indignantly. "I will trouble you to take this

letter to the post in the course of the morning."

"Is it her ladyship's?" said Gregory, examining the direction.

"No! it is mine," replied Florence.

"Then I decline to post it, Miss. I am only engaged to wait on Sir John, and my lady occasionally, and not on any of the upper servants, except as a favour," said Gregory, throwing the letter on to the table.

"I am not a servant, sir, and you know it," replied Florence, reddening at the indignity conveyed by the fellow's speech.

"Well, I don't see the difference, Miss," he continued, "you attend the children, and go into the drawing-room when you are rung for. You receive wages, and I do the same; so I don't see such difference between us that I'm to take your letters to the post, except as a favour."

Gregory's back being towards the door when he made this impertinent comparison, he had not perceived that Edward had entered the room and been a listener to his rudeness. He was startled

when his young master confronted him, and said—
“Take that letter, sir—take it instantly.”

Gregory, although flurried by this unexpected appearance, answered stubbornly, “I have made Miss Warner acquainted with my views, Mr. Hedward, and I’d rather carry out physic for a doctor than be servant to your ——”

He paused for a moment, and then added
“governess.”

Florence hid her face in her hands, and uttering a faint scream sank into a chair.

Edward’s anger overcame all restraint, and following the insolent fellow, who had hastily quitted the library, gave him a sound thrashing in sight of his fellow-servants.

Sir Gilbert having finished breakfast, resumed the study of his little volume, and Lady Norwold sought for all the information she desired to obtain of the world without in the columns of the then fashionable *Morning Chronicle*.

Sir Gilbert, after much sighing and figuring on the envelope of a packet which he had received during breakfast, paused, as though to

compose himself to speak without temper, and said—

“I am sorry to find, my dear Clara, that you have greatly exceeded the sum I named as the limit of our expenditure during my absence.”

“Have I, dear, indeed?” replied Lady Norwold, without discontinuing her perusal of the *Chronicle*.

“Yes, indeed, very much; and I am really distressed to observe that my account at Messrs. — and — is considerably overdrawn.”

“They are good souls,” said her ladyship, smiling, “and will consider it an evidence of your friendship; rely upon it. They know that you would not condescend to borrow of any but friends.”

“My dear, I assure you I do not consider such a matter a subject for jesting. In the first place, it should have been perfectly unnecessary, and in the next, it has incurred an obligation which I shall be distressed to acknowledge. Is it not so?”

“I am very sorry to hear what you say,” answered Lady Norwold, turning the newspaper

about, "the more especially as I wanted money rather particularly."

"Want money! More money, Clara? You perplex and astonish me. I was about to ask you whether we could not reduce our expenditure," said Sir Gilbert, becoming rather excited.

"As far as I am concerned," replied Lady Norwold, "I don't think it possible."

"Surely we might dispense with one of the carriages. The *vis-à-vis* is useless now, except to keep Jackson and a pair of cobs in idleness; and the Richmond villa might be sold as the season is nearly gone; and I think your present stock of jewellery need not be increased for a year or so. These retrenchments would amount to—how much?" and Sir Gilbert resumed his figuring.

"I'm not clever at arithmetic, Sir Gilbert," said her ladyship, coolly.

"Pray be serious a minute," replied her husband.

"I was never more so," answered my lady. "Shall I tell you what these retrenchments would produce?"

"That is what I am trying to arrive at."

"They would produce a great deal of inconvenience, a great many unpleasant remarks, and a great domestic quarrel between ourselves. So, if you please, we will break up this committee of ways and means," said her ladyship, throwing down the paper and walking to the window.

"But we must not live as we are doing, Clara, or we shall be ruined," bawled Sir Gilbert.

"Ruined!" repeated her Ladyship, laughing merrily. "Ruin is better than retrenchment. Let us fall with three carriages: they will at least make the auctioneer's catalogue look respectable! Ruined! My dear Sir Gilbert, you are not talking to a child. Ring the bell for me, like a good husband: you want to see Mr. Edward, do you not?"

"Yes."

And a servant answering the summons was despatched for the young gentleman. Edward soon came into the room, his face flushed, and evidently excited. The cool reception he met with from his father did not serve to allay his irritation.

"Shall I leave you gentlemen together?" asked Lady Norwold. "You have business, I believe."

"No," replied Sir Gilbert, "nothing particular—I mean, nothing which you may not know. I have here, Edward, your appointment," and he held up the packet on which he had been figuring. "It ensures you £300 a-year to commence with, and your own ability may increase it to £3,000. I will provide you with an outfit, so that you will commence life without debt or any of those incumbrances which frequently paralyse the efforts of young men, and enmeshes them, as it were, in a web of difficulties from which they never entirely escape."

Edward briefly thanked his father, his brain confused with the sense of his own position, and the effort he was about to make to disclose it to Sir Gilbert.

At that moment, Florence entered the room, having been sent for by Lady Norwold; and the sight of her—his wife! his beloved, insulted wife!—restored his manliness, and he resolved to make the avowal as soon as she had retired.

Florence had been greatly agitated by the events which had recently occurred, and no less moved by the idea that Edward was with his father for the one great purpose. Therefore her voice was sad and tremulous when she replied to Lady Norwold's desire to take the elder boy with her for a drive.

Lady Norwold was not in the best of tempers. Sir Gilbert had annoyed her greatly, and she remarked, when Florence had spoken,

"Surely the separation from Master Horace for a few hours can't be so painful as to require such a very mournful answer. Are you ill, or out of humour?"

"I am not well, my lady," replied Florence, her cheek reddening as she answered.

"Then I am sorry for you!" said her ladyship, tartly; "I am afraid that an infirmity of temper is sometimes mistaken for indisposition of body. I will take both the children."

Edward himself would probably have betrayed his secret prematurely, had not Gregory entered the room at the moment.

"I beg your pardon, Sir Gilbert, and yours, my lady, for hintruding, but there are circumstances that'll make a servant come up without being rung for," said that person.

"Well, well, what do you want?" said Sir Gilbert, petulantly.

"Will you please, Sir Gilbert," continued Gregory, "to look at them marks on the back of my coat. Them marks is from a cane."

"Nothing very serious in that," remarked Lady Norwold.

"True, very true, my lady, but when I tell you that they was made when I was inside the coat, I hope your ladyship will alter your opinion."

"Who caned you?" said Sir Gilbert.

"Mr. Edward Norwold—"

"Yes, I did," interrupted Edward, "and his insolence to this lady deserved a much severer thrashing than he received."

"Indeed!" exclaimed his father.

"Miss Warner was fortunate," said Lady Norwold, with a sneer, "to have found such a champion."

"Why were you insolent to my governess?"

"Oh, my lady!" whined Gregory, "don't ask me for explanations; ask the servants generally; ask—"

"No one but me if you please, madam," said Edward. "Leave the room, fellow!"

Gregory was too glad to escape, as he foresaw a tempest was about to commence, and he might be the first victim to its violence.

Florence had thrown her arms around her husband's neck, and clung to him for support.

"What is the meaning of this?" cried Sir Gilbert, astounded at what he saw, and Lady Norwold was equally scandalised.

"Be not surprised, sir, that this lady has sought my protection. She has the right to do so."

"What!" exclaimed Sir Gilbert, the dark fiendish look peculiar to him when greatly excited spreading over his face; "you will not dare to say that woman is your—"

"My wife, sir—my faithful, loving wife," answered Edward, drawing Florence closer to him as he spoke.

"Yes, his wife," sobbed Florence; "my love has been selfish, not criminal."

"Not criminal!" cried Lady Norwold; "have you not deceived me?"

"Pray, madam, spare your reproaches. This matter concerns myself only and my father," said Edward, bowing respectfully.

"You are right, young man, it is between us only. Who was this person?" said Sir Gilbert, hoarsely.

"The daughter of a distinguished colonist."

"The daughter of some liberated convict, doubtless," said Sir Gilbert; "and worthy to be one in such a beggar's match."

Edward's nostrils dilated with indignation, and he was about to reply, when his father checked him by a motion, and then said, as deliberately as though nothing had occurred previously to move him—

"Edward Norwold, you have chosen for yourself, you have forgotten all the claims your father had upon you, and have made your own election for the future—of course not without due calcu-

lation; that I have a right to conclude to be the case. It is well that I have known it in time to lessen my own obligation to my friends and yours to me."

As he said this he tore up the appointment into several small pieces, and opening the window threw them into the street.

"You see, sir, what I have done with your appointment;—and where I have thrown that paper I desire to leave you. You and your wife will quit this house as soon as possible—to-day at the latest; and I trust that I may never look upon you, ungrateful wretch, again, whilst I am spared to live."

Other words followed which must not find a place in these pages, and then, with a steady step and upright carriage, he walked out of the room, Edward never removing his eyes from him until he had passed out at the door.

Edward then kissed Florence tenderly, most tenderly, and said: "Our doom is spoken, my beloved one. Come, let us submit to it."

"Oh, no, no! Edward, you must not go without

one effort to recover all that you are losing for my sake. O Lady Norwold, you will not let him be driven from his father's house without interceding for him—without an effort to revoke this dreadful sentence."

"Ask me to interfere, Miss Warner, or rather I should say, Mrs. Norwold?" said Lady Norwold; "you are asking impossibilities. In the first place I am not disposed to have an altercation with my husband; and again, the deception you have practised upon myself is not so easily forgiven, I assure you."

"Come Florence," said Edward, "we have only ourselves to befriend us; 'the world is all before us where to choose,'—is it not so, Lady Norwold?"

"I conclude as much," replied her ladyship. "You people who make these romantic marriages are always prepared, I suppose, for the consequences. They form part of the charms of the situation, I believe. I really could do nothing, if I would. Mr. Norwold knows that his father is not easily influenced by any one, especially when

he conceives that he is injured ; and I must say he has some cause in this instance. But I will promise this, that if at any future time I find an opportunity for attempting a reconciliation, I will do what I can."

"Thanks, my lady," replied Edward, "but there will be always two to reconcile, two to forgive injuries, and the attempt would fail. For your kindly consideration to myself and to this dear lady, accept my warmest thanks. I can say no more."

Lady Norwold held out her hand, which Edward pressed gently, and then, as she looked at Florence, her woman's heart spoke out, and she exclaimed, "Poor child ! poor child !" and kissed her.

That one display of womanly sympathy was remembered to her advantage when fortune had betrayed her to the usurer and his treacherous ally.

On the evening of that eventful day Mr. and Mrs. Norwold were once more installed in their former lodgings, which fortunately were unoc-

cupied. They found a letter from M. Fichard awaiting them, announcing his departure for Algérie, and telling them that he had arranged with a friend in Paris to forward at once to London all letters from Bathurst, whether directed to himself or to Aunt Letty, or to either of themselves. He promised to send them his address as soon as he was informed of it himself, and begged to hear all concerning themselves and their fortunes.

"I wish dear Aunt Letty had remained in Paris," said Florence, with a sigh.

"Why, my love?"

"I should then feel we had one friend in this great Europe on whom we might rely," answered Florence.

"We must trust only to ourselves, darling," said Edward, drawing her closely to him. "I can brave all, overcome all, but the feeling of dependence. So long as I knew that I needed no one's help or favour, I was ready to accept of both; but now that I must win for myself whatever is needful for us both, I should feel any

courtesy almost an act of charity. No. I must work; and He who feeds the ravens and the sparrows on the house-top will find me work to do."

Florence had no fear—no misgiving now, for the future; and both felt relieved that the crisis they had dreaded so long had arrived, and was decided.

CHAPTER X.

THE WARNERS BID FAREWELL TO BATHURST.

WHEN the letter of M. Fichard to Mr. Warner reached its destination, the effect it produced was painful in the extreme, and the part which Letty and her husband had taken was in no way excused by the loss of the letters which had been written before the marriage. Warner was greatly distressed that Florence should have been guilty of—he could hardly say disobedience, but the want of that filial reverence which it had been his dearest joy to believe she entertained for him and her mother. To have taken such an important step as she had done, without their positive approval or consent, appeared so monstrous, that at first he was disposed to close his heart against her, and to have no further interest in her welfare. And then her mother, as deeply stricken as he was, became the advocate of their

child, and reminded him of her youth and loving nature, and to what fascinating temptations she had been exposed, with no wiser head or colder heart to guide and remonstrate with her than Aunt Letty's. That, although they knew not who this M. Edward was, they had strong assurance that he was not unworthy of the love of their child; and as their own lives had been made so happy by the trust and affection they had mutually known, it was their duty to hope—nay, to believe, that their prayers had not been in vain, and that the happiness they had supplicated for their beloved Florence had been accorded to her. There was gentle chiding and strong comfort in what Lucy said, which soon won forgiveness from a father who from the hour of his daughter's birth had known no limit to his love or his indulgence.

As for Uncle Jack, he blamed no one so much as himself, not even Aunt Letty. Certainly not Florence, nor the bold young fellow who had carried her off so gallantly. It was he that had coaxed his pet away from her mother's watchful care and simple teaching, and had been blind—stone-blind

—to the weakness of the thoughtless guardian to whom he had confided their precious treasure. Lucy might not reproach him with words—Warner had no right to do so, as he was nearly as criminal as himself—but Jack fancied that every sorrowful look she wore, every sigh she gave, were registered against him somewhere, and that she thought him her cruellest foe, although he loved so very dearly. Lucy was quick at reading such honest books as the face of Jack, and her husband and she soon deciphered what was rankling in the heart of her good old brother, and resolved to remove it. There was much womanly skill displayed in the process.

She told him it was true that, only for his ready sacrifice of his own interest, Florence could not have gone to Europe, but that he should remember also, that had he not been recalled to Bathurst, by Warner's accident, this marriage could not have taken place without their knowledge and approval;—Jack would have discovered the threatened danger, and stood between his niece and matrimony. And then, as there was

no recalling the past, it was well to seek out any good that might have come with the evil, and there was a very welcome blessing in the wake of this sorrow. Warner had not recovered the shock of his accident, and his health had been uncertain and failing for some time. He had been advised, as he had amassed a considerable fortune, to return to his native land. This advice was repugnant to him of late, ever since Gilbert had claimed the title, and he had hesitated to adopt it, until this news reached him, and then—well Lucy had pressed it—he determined to wind up his affairs in the colony, and bid it farewell for ever.

Jack threw his hat into the air when Lucy communicated this resolve of Warner, and declared it to be his honest belief that all would turn out to have been for the best if they would only wait for the end.

Kind, loving letters of forgiveness were therefore written to Madame Florence and M. Edward, and to Aunt Letty and M. Fichard, and despatched under cover to that latter gentleman at his place

of business in the Rue Rivoli, Paris. The Fates, alas! were adverse, and the comfort those letters contained never arrived to solace those by whom it was most needed, until it was too late, and the first battle of their lives was ended.

When Warner's determination to leave the colony became known, it occasioned a general feeling of regret, as his ability and enterprise had done much to increase the prosperity of the community. So many had profited by his advice and assistance, whilst others had come to look upon him as a man to be trusted in every relation of life, that his departure assumed the character of a calamity. Indeed he was subjected to so much solicitation, and even remonstrance to re-consider his determination, that his resolution might have given way before a sense of duty, had not the consideration for his child been admitted to be a paramount obligation that could not be foregone for any other interests, and therefore Lucy had been right when she declared that their present sorrow was not all evil.

It was not without great pain that Warner

bade farewell to that land which had received him when almost an outcast from his own, and where his early toil had been rewarded with such bounteous gains, that he had been able to call to him those he loved the dearest in the world, and who had made his life almost too happy for continuance, until the sorrow came which was to carry him back to the old world, where he would be a stranger among his own kindred, and in no less solitude than when he had a home in the lonely Bush. His regrets were not of long duration, for he was strong in faith, and believed that he could trace in this enforced separation the hand of Providence.

The voyage was made in safety, and now that the old land was gained, and there was no longer the great sea between him and his child, he had no other feeling but of utter thankfulness that they should be again together, to be separated, he prayed, by no other accident of life.

No happy omen, however, was to welcome back the wanderer. The London agent had no letters from Florence nor Aunt Letty, nor M. Fichard,

although Warner's business communications had been duly delivered. What could this disappointment imply? What was to be done? Jack Spraggatt was alert, as usual, and he proposed that he should start instantly for Paris, as Warner had many business matters claiming his attention. And Lucy would accompany him, and take with her those words of love and forgiveness which the post had failed to convey, and which would be so much more welcome to their darling Florence when spoken by her mother than by Uncle Jack; and Paris could be reached in three days at most. Therefore it was decided that they should start the next morning, and in the meantime endure the suspense with patience.

Warner busied himself with his affairs as much as possible, and thus kept his hopes and fears in abeyance; but the nights which intervened between Lucy's departure and the receipt of her first letter were almost without sleep. Neither did this letter help to allay Warner's anxiety, for she said:—

“ We were much distressed to find that Letty and her husband had left Paris some months for Algérie, where M. Fichard has a civil appointment, and that the person who owned the house could give us no information respecting Florence. A packet of letters had arrived from the colony, and which they had been instructed to forward to England, but the French post-office authorities refused to deliver them unless by the written authorisation of M. Fichard, to whom they were addressed. The people of the house had taken no further trouble in the matter, as M. Fichard had left at the worst season of the year for letting their apartments, and after giving the proprietor a very short notice.

“ My distress being very apparent the proprietor’s wife became more anxious to assist us, and remembered that a German tutor, Herr Dortz, who formerly occupied the *cinquième*, or garret, in their house, had been very intimate with the family, and usually made one of their parties during the time a young lady was residing with them. From her descrip-

tion, I recognised our darling Florence, whom this kind woman declares to be most amiable and beautiful. I dare not trust myself to say more. To trace Herr Dortz was our next difficulty, as he became too poor to retain even his attic in this popular neighbourhood; but Jack succeeded, after many hours' search, in discovering his last lodging in Paris, and then only to learn that he had returned to his native place in Germany. I forget the name of the town, but Jack has it written down correctly. To-morrow, therefore, we start for Germany; and my heart is full of hope that we shall gain tidings of our darling, and find her in England, as the *propriétaire* is certain that they left Paris some time before M. Fichard went away."

Then followed expressions of her wifely love, and such consoling and encouraging words, that Warner, when he had read them, resolved to imitate her courage and hopefulness.

Warner wisely concluded that occupation was the best solace he could find, and therefore he kept himself fully occupied throughout the day.

Among other trusts which had devolved upon him from his brother colonists, was that of executor to the will of a prosperous settler who had bequeathed over £15,000 to Marian Mayley, a niece in England, at the same time appointing Warner her guardian, should he ever return (as it was said he would do) to the Old Country. He had written to the young lady, requesting an interview, and one was appointed to take place at the residence of an aunt in Suffolk Street, Pall Mall.

London had altered greatly since last Warner had looked upon King Charles' statue at Charing Cross, and he would hardly have recognised the locality, but for that equestrian effigy of departed royalty. He soon found himself at Suffolk Street, and was evidently expected by Miss Mayley and her aunt, as the elderly lady was arrayed in full state to receive him. Miss Mayley was strikingly beautiful, and appeared to be not altogether insensible to her natural advantages (what pretty woman can be?), and she shook back her long, dark curls before she advanced to receive Mr.

Warner. Her aunt had evidently migrated from the city—say from Billiter Square, and gave a most singular sweep of her head in acknowledgment of Mr. Warner's bow, making the bird of Paradise on her yellow turban quiver again. Like many other odd people, she had only to be allowed to be natural to discover a great many good qualities, of which she gave no outward promise; and Warner soon found that, making certain allowances for want of early education, Mrs. Gregson was a very agreeable old lady. She was very proud of her niece and her niece's fortune, and evidently considered that with such an excellent recommendation, combined with Miss Mayley's beauty, the family had a right to look up, and to find itself "somebody" in the course of a short time. When Mrs. Gregson heard that Warner and his wife had no settled habitation in London she peremptorily insisted that he should make his home in Suffolk Street until such time as he had decided upon his future arrangements. This request was made with so much heartiness that Warner could not refuse the hospitality, nor

could he decline an invitation to dine there that day, when Cousin Martha would be of the party.

Poor Warner was too glad to escape from the society of his own thoughts, and was also desirous of learning something of the young lady committed to his care. Before dinner Mrs. Gregson herself conducted him to the chamber, which she desired he would be pleased to consider his own for the future, and promised to have another arranged by the morrow for a study, or counting-house, or anything he liked to call it; and Warner began really to admire the yellow turban, which, at first sight, he had thought the most odious head-dress he had ever seen upon a woman. When he returned to the drawing-room before dinner, he was introduced to Cousin Martha, who had arrived during his absence. She had evidently been considered a beauty in her youth, and had out-stood her market, although it appeared that she did not despair of an offer, as her rich auburn hair was cultivated into a crop, and her shoulders were exhibited in a state of nature. Whether matrimony could have

plumped her out to satisfactory dimensions was questionable; but as she was presented to Mr. Warner, there was only the frame-work of a fine woman, which evidently required covering.

The dinner was very bountiful, and combined several reminiscences of Mansion House banquets, at which Mrs. Gregson had assisted, when the late Mr. G. had been in the flesh and the Common Council. The hospitable hostess was profuse in her regrets that there was no gentleman present to assist Warner in passing the bottle, but, possibly doing violence to her own feelings and habits, she certainly contrived to be a moderate substitute for such a companion. She was very curious about New South Wales, and asked a number of questions, from which it might have been inferred that she set the colonial civilisation at a very low point, and conceived that tailors and milliners were not the most prosperous amongst the settlers.

Warner was at some pains to correct these erroneous notions; and gave such a favourable account of all matters colonial, that the New

World appeared to the excited fancy of Mrs. Gregson to be overflowing with every blessing except marriageable ladies ; and this conviction induced her to exclaim :—

“ Why, Martha, dear, what a place for you ! ”

The lady of the crop did not appreciate the suggestion as complimentary, and replied that Mrs. Gregson had thought of nothing but matrimony all her life, and would marry again before she was sixty !

There was so much acerbity in this remark, that Mr. Warner was not surprised at the sharp shoulders, nor the sharp, red nose, nor the auburn crop, and the ringless fourth finger of the left-hand.

Miss Mayley was disturbed by the little exhibitions of ignorance and vulgarity on the part of her relatives, and Warner sought to change the conversation to subjects more agreeable to her. Miss Mayley acknowledged the obligation by chatting freely on matters within her knowledge ; and Warner gathered from their colloquy that the young lady had a little vanity, and

rather high expectations, but was at heart a kind, maidenly creature, who might in skilful hands be moulded into an excellent woman; and he resolved to make her and Lucy—perhaps his dear Florence also—friends, and so discharge his trust faithfully. With this thought uppermost in his mind, Mr. Warner took his leave, promising to return on the morrow, and avail himself of Mrs. Gregson's very liberal hospitality.

He had been domiciled in Suffolk Street three days before he received a letter from Lucy. His hand trembled as he broke the seal, for his heart foreboded evil. Yes, bad news! Herr Dortz had returned to Paris, so the hunters must hark back!

He was glad to find, therefore, on his return to Suffolk Street from the City, that the ladies had arranged to go to the Opera, which now was near its close. He would be, therefore, left to himself, as his mind was out of tune, and jangled melancholy music.

He retired to rest very early, and soon fell into an unquiet sleep that brought strange dreams. He dreamed that he was at Norwold

Hall, blackened and charred as he had often thought of it at times, but the snow fell, and hid the traces of the fire until it appeared one whitened heap. He turned away into the old avenue of elms, and some reflex of his sufferings, when he was driven forth by his father, came over him, and he hastened on to reach the open space beyond. As he did so, his feet became entangled in briars and other undergrowth, and he tried to cry for help, but could not utter a sound. At last he paused in his effort to proceed, and saw standing beside him Raymond Ray, half miller, half bushman, and who showed him, by the light of the moon, the diamond bracelet. He was not moved by what he saw until the miniature of his father grew larger and larger, and every feature of the face became distinctly visible. He thought it smiled, then grew overcast, and then it smiled again. His dream became confused after this, and he fancied he was once more upon the sea, great waves rolling by the ship, and by his side his daughter Florence.

The driver of the hackney-coach, containing the returning opera party, knocking at the door awoke him, and he tried for some time to piece his dream together as though he imagined it was a revelation sent to him in his sleep. His father's face, with its smiles and its displeasure, was recalled so vividly, that his heated fancy connected it somehow with the abandonment of his name and inheritance, until the line of Hamlet came to his remembrance,—

“Do you not come your tardy son to chide?”

These thoughts disturbing him greatly, he rose and, opening the window, looked out into the street. As he did so he observed a man in a cloak walking up and down on the opposite side of the way, occasionally looking towards the windows of the houses and continuing his observation until Warner heard the servant close the shutters of the drawing-room, when Mrs. Gregson and her niece retired to rest. The man paused opposite their house for a moment, made a frantic gesture, and left the street. This incident had the effect

of changing the current of Warner's thoughts, and he retired again to rest, sleeping soundly until the morning.

When assembled at the breakfast table Mrs. Gregson gave expression to some very original criticisms on what she had heard and seen the preceding evening.

"I was quite ashamed of my sex," she said, "when I saw Norma and the other young woman running after that soldier-fellow; and by moonlight too, in the middle of a wood, that put me in mind of Epping Forest, where the Alderman and me went one Fairlop Fair. If it had not been for those two unfortunate children, who were certainly rather tall to have been only just short-coated, I should have been very pleased when the old clergyman in a long beard gave her up to the police-officers."

Mrs. Gregson said much more, and quite as little to the purpose; but Miss Mayley was more silent and thoughtful than a young lady ought to have been who had been listening to the music of *Norma*, with Pasta for the interpreter of the

ill-fated Druidess. "The glare of light always made her head ache," she said; although it certainly did no damage to her complexion, for she blushed like roses when Warner, for want of something better to say, mentioned the mysterious promenader he had seen from the window, and at which Mrs. Gregson laughed, and said it must have been an admirer of Cousin Martha, as she had been of the party, but had returned to her own house in Billiter Square. The joke was so good that Marian actually put her cup down with a bounce, and ran out of the room coughing very loudly. Mrs. Gregson laughed more than ever, and as she wore in the morning a black turban covered with bugles, upon which a stray sunbeam now played, her head appeared coruscating with witticisms or electric sparks, like those a cat emits when her hair is rubbed the wrong way. In this high state of hilarity Warner left her, and went to his agents in the city.

Three more weary days came and passed before Warner received another letter. It was from

Jack this time, having been written at the room of Herr Dortz, in order to save the post to England.

“Hooray!” it began, “Herr Dortz is bagged at last, and appears to be a very stupid old German, but I have made this out of him. He will take me to the church or chapel where they were married, as he can’t remember its name, or that of the street, and then we shall know who Mr. Edward is, for Dortz is evidently in a muddle upon that point. He thinks also he can find from his pocket-book (which he has mislaid) where they went to in England—for they did leave Paris.

“Be patient, my dear old boy, and all will come right at last. So prophesies your devoted

“JACK SPRAGGATT.”

Here was some relief at last, and so he would wait patiently and hopefully.

In the meantime he will not be unemployed—what with his shipping agents, and his stock-

brokers, and his pretty ward. Nor has he seen the last of the strange man in the cloak, nor of one whom he knew only by name in the far-off colony, when Lieutenant Hammerton did him the honor to accept an obligation and forget it.

CHAPTER XI.

A MORNING IN CUPID'S GARDEN.

SINCE the days of the Merry Monarch, as it has been the fashion to call the licentious Charles the Second, the enclosure in St. James's Park has had a peculiar attraction for the votaries of love-in-idleness, and thither they have resorted to catch a glance of the fickle deity. The ducks which have inhabited those waters since Mr. Storey was the King of Duck Island, are supposed to be Rosicrucians, permitted to assume those ornithological shapes, and thus revisit the scene of their former pleasures. Rochester, Buckingham, Cheffinch, Portsmouth, Castlemaine, may all be there for what we know, and one old drake that is usually well-conducted, and sober enough, until he breaks out occasionally into water antics, standing on his head, and then skirling over the surface of the lake in pursuit of

two Muscovy ducks, is supposed by the learned in such abstruse matters of transmigration to be old Samuel Pepys flirting with Mistress Knibb and Mistress Pierce. Be this as it may, the enclosure has been long known as Cupid's garden, and Hymen has enlisted many followers as they emerge from its gates on balmy summer evenings.

Here, then, on the morning after Miss Mayley's visit to the opera had Vincent Elliott come, neglecting his own pleasant Temple Gardens and their historic memories, to cast himself upon the sunburnt turf beneath the shade of a wide spreading beech-tree, or some other umbrageous giant.

He looked at his watch at short intervals, and at last muttered to himself:

"There never was a punctual woman : they are either too fast or too slow, like a Dutch clock. They're as uncertain as a tavern bill, or a coach-fare, and the force of simile can no further go. Twenty minutes past ten ! The park will soon be like a nursery ground. Maids and babies will

be as plentiful as small salad in June. Why don't she come?"

He sat up to make a better observation, but his eyes wandered round about, and evidently saw not the object of his search. He recognised, however, his eccentric acquaintance, Captain Elmsley, and the discovery was not pleasurable.

"There's Elmsley!" he thought, "by all that's unlucky. That fellow's course is as eccentric as a comet's!" His next thought was flight, but perceiving that Elmsley had observed him, he concluded to remain, and get rid of him as soon as possible.

"How do? How do, my boy?" said the Captain, little imagining what was passing in Elliott's mind—"Like myself, eh? Out with the ducks."

"Yes," was Elliott's answer.

"Nice place this," continued the Captain. "I often spend an hour here watching the Muscovies, and the dab-ducks, and the other things paddling about, 'till I fancy I see the rascals swimming in a lake of brown gravy; when I

take out a biscuit and devour them in imagination."

"Indeed!" replied Elliott.

"Indeed!" said Elmsley—"why, you are as laconic as a pauper's epitaph! What's the matter, my boy? you are either anxious for me to go, or for somebody else to come."

"Somebody to come, or you to go?" asked Elliott, confused, and wondering in his own mind if the Captain could really have a doubt as to the true state of the case.

"Are you fond of children?" said Elmsley, evidently anxious to be taken into confidence.

"Yes—for a bachelor," replied Elliott. "What do you mean by that question?"

"Nothing," said Elmsley, "only I have known some frequenters of this spot find the society of children particularly interesting, but then the nurses have not been remarkably ugly."

They both laughed, and Elliott saw that the Captain had a shrewd suspicion of the object which had brought him to the Enclosure, and feeling convinced that he would not leave until his

curiosity was satisfied, determined therefore to make him his confidant.

"Captain!" said Elliott, "it is not easy to deceive a man of your experience; and I am here, having fallen in love, and become anxious to get married."

"O la!" cried Elmsley, "not so bad as that, I hope! There must be a matrimonial epidemic raging; as you are the fourth fine healthy bachelor that has shown alarming symptoms of the disorder this week—How did you take it?"

"Naturally enough," replied Elliott, not caring to speak seriously to his friend the Captain. "The first symptoms, I fancy, developed themselves when we were at Drury Lane together, and were increased last night at the Opera——"

"Oh, oh!" interrupted Elmsley, "merely an affection of the eyes, I thought it had been an inflammation of the heart; your case is not dangerous."

"Doctor! Doctor! you are wrong in your diagnosis. I am in love, honestly—truly. I can

neither study, eat, nor sleep," said Elliott, with a sigh.

"Exactly my case years ago," remarked Elmsley, "but brandy saved me. It first rushed into my head, and then got me into the watchhouse. I should have been married then, to a certainty, only when I ought to have been at the altar of St. James's Church I was at the Bar of Bow Street."

"You are right to laugh at me," said Elliott, a little piqued; "but if you remember—but you are not likely to have been impressed as I was with that lovely face."

"Not I! not I!" replied Elmsley. "Ha! ha! I thought you were seriously touched; but you're not!"

"But I am!" said Elliott, with emphasis, "and as though Nature had not done enough for her, Fortune must be her godmother. She is an heiress!"

"An heiress!" said Elmsley, seating himself beside his prostrate friend,—for Elliott had stretched himself at length on the grass, and

covered his face with his hat while he made this odd confession.

"An heiress, eh? I don't believe it. They are so scarce now-a-days. No brown beauties from Bombay! No golden Venuses from Wapping! India consumes its own produce, and the city seems to have lost the art of making them. However, let me hear what you have to say."

Elliott then recalled the circumstances which attended their visit to the theatre, the rainy night, and the sacrifice he had made in placing his hackney coach at the service of three ladies. O yes. Elmsley remembered well the carrotty crop, the yellow turban, and the girl with the black eyes.

For two days Elliott had been so possessed by the young girl's beauty, that he thought he would lay the ghost which haunted him by a visit to Billiter Square, where he might chance to see her in her every-day life, and so break the spell. He remembered the number of the house, and thither he went to discover, to his great

gratification, that John Mayley, who resided there, was a Ship Chandler and Dealer in Marine Stores. That knowledge would be sufficient to smother any fancy which had possessed him, he was certain, and so he turned his steps westward, but he had not left the street when the beautiful face came back to him, and his feet moved more slowly until they stopped at last, and he thought he would, from mere curiosity, endeavour to learn something more concerning its possessor. As he stood looking towards the dingy shop, a lad came forth carrying a bulky parcel, and Elliott resolved to question him. The lad was not reserved, and soon related all the family history.

“There was a Miss Mayley as wore her hair a crop; was it she? And there was a Miss Mayley as was a deal younger, and dark eyes, and such nice hair; was it she? Oh, it was, was it? Ah—she only came on a visit with her aunt, Mrs. Gregson, a widow, and they was gone back again to their own home in Suffolk Street, Pall Mall. A prime street that was—all among

the gentry at the West-end. *That* Miss Mayley had been brought up by her aunt, and was to have all the money some day. Not as she wanted it, for an uncle as went abroad and died there, had been and left her fifteen thousand pound, if he'd left her a penny, it was said."

Elliott rewarded his informant with half-a-crown, and went straight to his chambers in the Temple. They were excellent rooms, overlooking the garden and the river, but they appeared so dull and cheerless now, that he had resolved to abandon his studies and his boating, and dedicate every hour of his life to obtaining an introduction to this beautiful angel.

"No—call her heiress," interrupted Elmsley ;
"it is a better term ; it sounds more substantial."

Elliott preferred his own designation, and then went on to say, that he had kept a respectful watch upon her house, and had more than once passed her in the street, and was certain that she had recognised him. Last night he had seen her at the Opera, and by her manner he was convinced that his respectful admiration was not unfavour-

ably received. An introduction to the family appeared to be impossible by the usual means, and he had therefore bribed the milkman, from whom he had learned the name of her lady's-maid, to convey a letter to that person, asking a meeting here in the Enclosure, and had obtained an appointment, although the time was somewhat past, and he almost feared that the maid had been laughing at him.

"Look," said Elmsley, "yonder comes the damsel; there's intrigue in every plait of her petticoat. Pretty foot, and she knows it, or she would not have shown her ankle in stepping over that little boy's hoop-stick."

Mrs. Digby justified Elmsley's description; for she was a bold, scheming woman, whose main business was to make money, and cared little for the means by which she increased her gains. She had noticed Elliott more than once sauntering near the house of Mrs. Gregson, and was not surprised, therefore, at receiving the communication from the milkman, and instantly discovered, in the possibility of a clandestine

correspondence between her young mistress and this admirer, certain profit to herself, whatever might be the consequence to Miss Mayley.

"Have I the honour of addressing Mr. Vincent Elliott?" she said, with a slight curtesy.

Elliott acknowledged that he was that gentleman, and the presumptuous sender of a letter and enclosure to Mrs. Digby.

"Your object in making this assignation, I presume," said Digby, smiling, "is not on my own account, and I am glad of it"—she added, as both the gentlemen expressed by their action that she had arrived at a correct conclusion—"I am glad of it, for I am plagued to death with offers."

"I trust Miss Mayley is not as amply provided as yourself," said Elliott, not caring if Mrs. Digby had been proposed for by the whole household brigade.

"Miss Mayley," said Digby, "is, in my opinion, a deal too fastidious. Lovers shouldn't be looked at like French cambric; you are all a little faulty. I've broken the ice for half-a-dozen

young fellows, who thought nothing of a five-pound note."

Elliott understood the hint, as his enclosure had been only a sovereign, but he merrily said:

"And were such valuable young gentlemen all rejected?"

"La! bless you, sir, she wouldn't hear of one of 'em," said Digby, opening her eyes widely to convey her disgust. "The fact is—that is, it's my belief—that she has made up her mind to marry a title, or die a spinster."

"There is an end to my hopes," said Elliott, addressing Elmsley, *sotto voce*, and then taking a turn on the grass.

"I don't see it," replied Elmsley; and leading Mrs. Digby a little apart, he said in a whisper, "Mrs. Digby, you are evidently a clever woman, and can manage this matter if you like. My friend here is very anxious for an introduction to Miss Mayley; and as his lordship is very unhappy, the sooner the auspicious moment can be brought about the better."

The word "lordship" had struck upon Digby's

ear, and Elmsley allowed her to place her own construction on a phrase common enough in ordinary conversation.

"He's a lord," thought Digby. "He only enclosed a sovereign. Not wanting money himself, he thinks nobody else does. Desires to be *incog.*, I suppose. That's very like having a best gown and never wearing it."

Elmsley did not interrupt her reverie until Elliott had again joined them, when the Captain said :

"I am sure Mrs. Digby may count on your liberality if, by her means, we can be introduced. Eh? Vincent."

Elliott rather started at the Captain's familiarity, but did not hesitate to make the most liberal promises to Digby, pressing upon her a note for five pounds, as an earnest of the future.

"Well, gentlemen," said the experienced negotiator, "I see only one way of doing it. Miss Mayley has a favourite Pomeranian dog—a brute—I hate it, and I will contrive, now she is out, to carry the little beast to our milkman's; there

will be a rare fuss, you may be sure, when they come home to lunch. Hand-bills, and all that—a sovereign reward, I shouldn't wonder; and then, gentlemen, I must leave the rest to your ingenuity, as the Pomeranian wretch shall be delivered up to you, if you so desire it. Our milkman is a poor man, with a large family, and will expect—"

"Of course, of course," interrupted Elmsley, "two sovereigns—you may promise him two sovereigns from us."

"Certainly," said Elliott; thinking, however, that the Captain was a most generous fellow with anybody's purse but his own.

"We don't dine until half-past six to-day, as the party as is staying with us cannot get home from the City before. There's the clock striking twelve, and we lunch at half-past one, so there's no time to spare, and consequently, gentlemen, I wish you a very good morning, and thank you, for me."

Having made her very best curtsey, the vulgar *intriguante* took her way homeward.

"All's fair in love, I hope," said Elliott, "as I feel a little shabby at what I am proposing to do. Nor after what that woman has said, do I see much chance of success."

"We will not fail!" cried Elmsley, theatrically. "I shall not leave you until I can take you by the hand and say, Bless you my boy, take her and be happy."

"Aha! then I shall have the pleasure of your society for a few days, I fancy," replied Elliott, smiling.

"Don't name it," said Elmsley, "I will inconvenience myself to serve you. Decision is everything in such matters, and that is a military accomplishment."

"Billeted," thought Elliott; adding, "By the bye, Elmsley, as we are to be chums, don't you think it will be as well—not that I am curious, but in case I should be asked the question—that, I should know something about you?"

Elmsley was apparently surprised, and said, "Something about me?"

"Ay!" continued Elliott. "You seem to

know everybody : you shoot forth in the morning, and coruscate during the day, and vanish at night. You appear to be a gentleman, but you may be Asmodeus or Commissioner Lin, for what anyone knows to the contrary. I suppose you do come from somewhere, and are related to somebody."

"My dear boy," replied Elmsley, rather moved, "I consider your questions particularly impertinent; but as I like you, I shall endeavour to gratify your curiosity."

"I really meant not to be offensive," said Elliott.

"I conclude not," answered Elmsley, "as you are a gentleman, and I am the youngest son of one. I entered the army at sixteen, and served in New South Wales. I then returned to England, quitted the paths of glory for the shady side of Pall Mall, and, am bold to say, the service lost an ornament. You now know who I am." When he had finished, the Captain, as though to bring the conversation to an end, made a low bow.

Elliott returned the salute, and was fain to acknowledge, in his own mind, that he was as much in the dark as ever respecting his friend of The Cock. We may have to record another biography of the Captain, if we wait for the end.

As Elliott found it would be useless to return to his chambers for any useful study, during the time that had to elapse before Mrs. Digby could put her scheme into execution, and as he became more reconciled to Elmsley's companionship in this rather questionable invasion of the domestic dominions of Mrs. Gregson, he proposed to his new ally, that they should occupy part of the time in a quiet stroll to Westminster Abbey, and there, as Elmsley said, look out the site for the tomb of the Lord Chancellor Elliott. As they proceeded in the direction of the Abbey, a sudden turn in the path brought them upon two ladies, one engaged in reading a book, whilst the other was listening to her, resting her hands on the handle of a very formidable parasol. Elliott stopped, and checked the pro-

gress of his friend, by placing a hand upon his arm, and whispering "Stay! she is there!"

Miss Mayley's eyes had for a moment wandered from her book and rested upon her persecuting admirer, whilst Mrs. Gregson, surprised at the sudden cessation of the reading, looked up, and was about to turn her spectacles in the same direction she found her niece's regards had taken, when Miss Mayley suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, dear aunt, don't!"

"Don't what?" replied Mrs. Gregson, and, as a matter of course, staring with all her eyes in the forbidden direction.

"What an unlucky *contretemps*," Marian thought half aloud: "the man will think I am the fourteenth daughter of some unpopular family, and wish to attract his attention," and forthwith she proceeded to read with much energy, but corresponding incoherence.

Elliott would have retreated, but Elmsley insisted upon taking the enemy in front, and, as they advanced, poor Marian Mayley was horrified to hear her aunt exclaim—

“Why, my dear, I’ve seen that young man’s face before, I’m sure and certain. Of course I have! Isn’t he the polite person who gave up his hackney coach to us, when we were caught in the rain at Drury Lane Theatre? If he looks this way again, I shall certainly give him a bow.”

As the Fates would have it, this chance introduction did not take place, Elliott, fancying that he and his friend were the objects of Mrs. Gregson’s attention, passed by, apparently unconscious of the presence of either of the ladies, and Marian was very grateful for her escape; continuing, however, to make so many blunders, as she attempted to read on, that her aunt came to the conclusion, that the glare of the sun was hurting her eyes, and suggested a walk to the gate, where Mrs. Gregson usually invested a penny in curds and whey, to the great scandal of her niece, and the amusement of other fine ladies.

The Abbey was not open that morning, as the Dean and Chapter were whitewashing the poets, or cleaning the waxwork, and therefore the two conspirators were compelled to seek some other

occupation. The milk-shop was in a little street leading out of Leicester Square, and Elliott remembered that it was faced by one of the *restaurants* peculiar to that quarter. Elmsley knew it well, he said, "and I go there whenever I want an order—I mean whenever I desire to visit the Opera, as the place is frequented by many of my professional friends, both native and foreign."

"Then we will lunch there; and as one of the windows commands a view of 'the dairy,' we shall be prepared to act as soon as Mrs. Digby affords us the means of doing so."

Elmsley considered Elliott's suggestion worthy of all commendation, and a walk of a quarter-of-an-hour soon found them seated at "Paravini's."

Having called for the carte, the dishes for selection appeared to be numerous, and had been named after very distinguished prototypes; but Elmsley's experience led him to recommend some of the homeliest preparations, and those least subject to sauce. Whilst their lunch was in preparation, Elmsley recognised, at the other

end of the room, a theatrical friend, named Ranton, and one whom he was particularly glad to meet.

Apologising to Elliott for leaving him to the contemplation of the red cow over the milkman's door, Elmsley joined his friend, and after certain civilities had passed between them, said :

"Have you read the drama I sent you?"

"Yes, Captain, and I like the piece very much," replied the actor. "I think I could do something with the part of the brother, although the woman is certainly the stronger of the two."

Actors, as a rule, never admit their own part in a piece to be the best, and therefore Elmsley bowed to his friend's criticism, at once expressing his pleasure at what he heard.

"I am greatly indebted to you, Mr. Ranton," he said, "for the trouble you have taken for me; and may I ask you to increase the obligation by putting the drama into the hands of your manager?"

"I would," said Ranton, "if I thought it would serve you; but it would not, strange as that asser-

tion may seem to you. Managers are very jealous of all their prerogatives, and ours, though the best fellow in the profession, would resent any interference with his duties, and your piece would be rejected."

"I am sorry to hear that," said Elmsley, "as I know how difficult it is to get a piece, by an unknown man, read by a manager."

"You would not be surprised that it is so," replied Ranton, "did you know the crude—nay, unmeaning rubbish that arrives at the stage-door under the name of dramas. No; I should not serve you. You must know some one who has influence with our governor."

"Would Rupert Merville's recommendation have any weight, think you?" asked Elmsley.

"Rupert! dear old Rupert! No doubt of it, and he would think it no trouble—in one of his moods—to read and write about your piece," said Ranton.

"I am greatly obliged," replied Elmsley; "I think I can obtain his assistance."

"I have left the piece out in case you should

call," said Ranton, "as you would not let me send it back—so, tat-ta! I have only run out during a carpenter's wait, as we have a long rehearsal of a certain failure. Look here," showing some soiled sheets of paper, "this is my part; not seven lengths for a man who has played Hamlet, and that is thirty-two."

Mr. Ranton made his *exit* with this piece of professional grumbling, and Elmsley returned to Elliott, and the lunch, which had been placed on the table.

Elliott told him that during his absence he had seen Mrs. Digby hurrying into the milkshop, carrying something bulky concealed under her shawl, and which she had left behind when she returned into the street.

"Then the Pomeranian beauty is in captivity," said Elmsley, "and we have but to await the announcement of the sum offered for her ransom to present ourselves to the Princess of the golden money-bags."

The Captain's thoughts were evidently in the theatre, and it was to be hoped that he was not

quoting from the drama which Rupert Merville was to read and recommend.

Paravini's wines were to be treated both with respect and caution. They professed to be natives principally from La belle France and the banks of the Rhine, and it was quite evident to those who made their acquaintance that they never would have been admitted again to the land of their birth, so much had they suffered from becoming naturalised in England. They were not, also, entitled to be received with unlimited confidence, as, like other foreign exiles, many of them had assumed names which they were not entitled to bear in their own countries, and much that was "Ordinary" had called itself Lafitte, and the most plebeian of hocks had assumed the princely designation of Metternich. The two plotters, however, sought "Dutch courage" rather recklessly, and a quiet stroll in the Park was decided upon before opening the campaign in Suffolk Street.

Elliott paid the bill, and then went forth with the Captain.

The fresh air by the lake-side soon dispelled the feeble fumes of Paravini's wine, and the two returned slowly, but confidently, to the scene of action.

On a street-post they read as follows:—

“STOLEN OR STRAYED,
A POMERANIAN DOG.

Answers to the name of ‘FLORETTA.’

Wore a blue ribbon, to which a locket was attached, containing nothing particular.

Whoever will bring the same to No. —, Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, shall receive (no questions asked)

ONE SOVEREIGN REWARD.”

CHAPTER XII.

VINCENT ELLIOTT REPENTS OF HIS EVIL DOING,
AND MAKES A FRIEND OF MR. WARNER.

Mrs. GREGSON and her niece returned home punctually at one, according to the custom of the elderly lady, as an excellent luncheon worthy of her civic experiences was always prepared as a mid-day prop to a rather hungry constitution. The two ladies had reached the drawing-room, preparatory to making a slight toilet, when Digby intercepted their ascent, and with looks of terror and a voice of woe announced the abduction of "Floretta." Miss Mayley was quite as distressed as she ought to have been at her loss, but to Mrs. Gregson the shock had been nearly productive of very disastrous consequences, for "hitting her," as she said, "just as she had arrived at the second landing after a sharpish walk home, as Marian had been very fidgety all the morning,

it fairly took the breath out of her body, and spoiled as nice a little appetite as she had had all the summer."

Digby had anticipated some of these consequences, and with a forethought which did her great credit, had prepared, by the assistance of the foot-boy (who had had the advantage of a parish education, and been weaned as it were in livery), the hand-bill which had attracted subsequently the attention of Elliott and Elmaley. Digby advised the immediate printing and circulation of the announcement of the loss the family had sustained, and the foot-boy being despatched to a neighbouring printer's, delivered the "copy," and then abandoned his afternoon duties to search the neighbourhood for the lost Floretta, in the hope of securing the reward as some compensation for the trouble she had occasioned him in washings, combings, and constitutional promenades.

As Digby was in attendance on Miss Mayley, the conversation turned naturally on the lost Floretta, and Digby detailed how she thought she

should have dropped when she first missed the dog, and had it not been for her bottle of smelling salts, she never should have done what she had done, which was to run out into the open streets with nothing on but her cap, and without a bit of shawl upon her shoulders. So strange she looked, that two gentlemen—quite gentlemen, who were standing at the corner of the street—asked her what was the matter; and when she told them, one of them, the younger one, exclaimed, “Miss Mayley’s dog! Captain, let us scour the neighbourhood.”

“Yes, your lordship,” replied the older party; that is, Digby was almost sure that he said “your lordship,” but she was too confused at the moment to take her affidavit of the exact words.

Why did Marian’s cheeks flush, and her full bosom rise and fall more quickly, as Digby told her this lady’s-maid’s fib, and read its effects upon her mistress, as she looked over her shoulder at her form reflected in the glass?

As Marian did not speak, Digby thought it advisable to make an observation.

“It was very kind, Miss, wasn’t it of two

strangers to take so much interest in poor Floretta?"

"Very," replied Marian, "though I fancy you were mistaken in imagining one to be a lord. He is a gentleman evidently—that is, I mean from his politeness, he must be one."

"O yes, certainly; that is, if we mean the same person," said Digby, artfully, having observed Marian's recent confusion.

"I mean no one in particular, how should I?" replied Marian, in a little pet. "My poor dear Floretta, I shall never be happy again if I lose you!" she added after a pause.

"Oh, yes, you will, Miss. You'll get married some day, and want no other pet than your husband. See what offers you've had, and refused already."

"Offers, Digby! I hope you do not consider those offers, as you call them, which I ought to have entertained for one moment."

"Oh, certainly not, though Mr. Hardman, the wholesale tobacconist, was very rich, and kept a beautiful phe-aton, Miss—"

"And patronised the horrors in which he dealt," replied Marian, inflating her fine nostrils to express her disgust.

"I don't think Mr. Richards such a very disagreeable man," said Digby, slurring the words a little.

"Digby!" exclaimed Marian, "the man called himself an upholsterer, but I do believe he sometimes performed at funerals."

"You don't say so!" said Digby, although she knew well enough that Mr. Richards performed the necessary duties of undertaker to the Corporation of London.

"As for that Mr. Ruffles—a broker, was he not? I never saw him without some unpleasant association. I always thought him one of those cruel men in possession of whom I have read, and fancied he was making our furniture up into lots."

"La! Miss. Mr. Ruffles was a stockbroker, not a furniture one. But I see how it is," answered Digby, "the City must give up the hope of having you for a lady-mayoress."

"If they would make the position permanent,

"I might be tempted," said Marian, with a smile.

"Well! if I didn't think so!" cried Digby. "Excuse me, Miss, but I have often said to myself, again and again, Miss Mayley will never marry under a title. And why should you, Miss? There are plenty of remnants of nobility that may be had at a bargain."

"Digby, don't talk such nonsense," said Marian. "You are always thinking of matrimony."

"But not on my own account, Miss; do me the justice to say that;" and feeling that she had sufficiently prepared the mind of her young mistress to receive any favourable impression that her employers could make, she left Miss Mayley to her own reflections.

The foot-boy was not successful, and had returned rather depressed and exhausted, to be soundly rated by the cook, with whom things had gone wrong all that day, as things will go sometimes; and when he, in the plenitude of his own tribulation, ventured "to give her as good as she sent," at a moment when she was particularly

hot, she administered to him a succession of cuffs which reminded him of his parochial beadle, and sent him howling to his only place of retirement—the boot-hole. Pain and disappointment, combined with brick-dust and blacking, had made him totally unfit to be seen when Elliott and his ally arrived with Floretta; and Digby, having been on the watch, was therefore enabled to open the door, and admit the conspirators.

The sound of the knocker roused Mrs. Gregson, who was sleeping off the effects of the shock her feelings had sustained by the loss of Floretta, and her appetite; and going to the glass (a feminine habit all over the world) she discovered to her horror that, in the agitation occasioned by the events of the morning, she had put on her bugles and not her bird of paradise.

To retreat up-stairs was the instinct of the moment; and Miss Mayley was left to receive the visitors.

Digby entered the room with mouth and eyes open, exclaiming as she did so, “O my dear Miss, here’s Floretta brought back—”

Marian rose up instantly, and as she advanced towards the door, exclaimed, "Where is the darling?"

"Hush, Miss," said Digby, interposing herself, "who *do* you think has brought back the pet?"

Marian could scarcely say Who? as she was instantly anticipated by Digby's answer.

"No other, Miss, than the two gents that spoke to me this afternoon. They have found her, and are on the landing outside, waiting to present her."

"O Digby, how could you invite them up, and my aunt not in the room?—they will think it so rude to be kept there."

"Then I had better show them in;" and without waiting for a reply, Digby introduced the two male conspirators, and then ran up-stairs to attend upon Mrs. Gregson, whose bell had been jingling in vain for some minutes.

Marian suspected some *ruse* when she saw Elliott—her unknown persecutor, as she was accustomed to consider him—and had long thought he would one day do something desperate. Her beautiful face was therefore rosy

with blushes, and her eyes brilliant, not with pleasure, yet scarcely with anger; so that poor Elliott's confusion was complete, and he could only stammer out, "I—that is, we have to apologise, madam, for this intrusion; but understanding that this little—little—"

"Pomeranian beauty," chimed in Elmsley, seeing Elliott in difficulties.

"Yes—Pomeranian—belonged to you—I—we—I could not be satisfied until we had placed it again in your possession."

Was he a barrister? Had he eaten terms for such an exhibition as this?

Marian was relieved by his embarrassment, as she had expected to have met, perhaps, a brazen fellow, who would have astounded her by his impudence. She had, therefore, courage to reply, saying, "I am greatly—very greatly obliged for the trouble you have taken about such—a trifle"—and then she paused. Elliott would have given anything for his wig and gown, feeling that he was called upon to say something more, or to withdraw. A glance at Elmsley decided him.

"Some physiologists," he said, leaning one hand upon the table, "have asserted that these lower animals are really guided by reason, and not influenced simply by instinct. I think—I think, this little—"

"Pomeranian pet"—again Elmsley came to the rescue.

"Yes—pet—the conduct of this pet destroys the hypothesis."

"I don't quite understand you, sir," said Miss Mayley, speaking very sincerely.

"I mean, madam," continued Elliott, placing one hand under the tails of his coat, and the other in his bosom—his favourite attitude when addressing an imaginary jury in the solitude of his chambers—"I mean, madam, that being an object of solicitude to you, had he been directed by reason, he would never have grown tired of captivity, and sought for freedom in the streets of this metropolis."

Marian knew not what to answer in reply to such eloquence, and so she said, "You flatter me, sir."

"Indeed not," continued Elliott, "for I consider flattery another form of insult; and if I dare—"

The opportune arrival of Mrs. Gregson prevented Elliott making a greater exhibition of himself than he had done already, and relieved Marian from a position which was becoming very embarrassing.

Digby had possessed Mrs. Gregson with the business of her visitors, and she therefore was prepared with a profusion of thanks when she entered the room. They nearly choked her, however, as she recognised at once the young gentleman to whom they had been indebted for the hackney-coach, and whose civility she had been so anxious to acknowledge in the morning.

"Why, deary me, Marian!" she exclaimed, "if it is not the gentleman we were talking about this very morning in the Park, before I took my curds and whey." (O Marian Mayley!)

"Pray sit down, gentlemen, for I am sure, and so was Marian, that you, sir," addressing Elliott, "was so very good when we went to see 'Romeo

and Julia' at Drury Lane, as to give up your hackney-coach when it was raining cats and dogs, as you may say."

"You are very kind to remember such a slight civility," said Elliott, recovering his self-possession.

"O dear, no; if you hadn't, sir, I should have spoiled my new turban, and the bird of paradise in it, which cost me two guineas and a half, wholesale price, I assure you."

Elliott seeing how much Marian was annoyed by her aunt's conversation, rose to leave, and this consideration was not lost upon Marian.

"And now," continued Mrs. Gregson, "only to think that you should have brought back our darling little Floretta, of which Marian, dear, you'll now be fonder than ever, having known her loss. I've got a sovereign somewhere, I know"—fumbling in a capacious netted purse, "and I am sure we're more obliged than money can pay."

"O, my dear madam," said Elliott, "pray do not ask me to cancel the pleasure I have received in restoring your favourite, by compelling me to

accept your promised reward. [How considerate, thought Marian.] But if I might dare to ask permission to make your acquaintance—”

“Oh, not the least objection, on my part,” said Mrs. Gregson; “but Miss Mayley, my niece, is no longer quite at her own disposal or mine.”

Elliott’s heart sank within him, as he instantly saw (Love is so readily jealous) a rival who had already been accepted.

Elmsley guessed what was passing in his friend’s mind, and resolved to set that matter of doubt at rest.

“Ah, ah!” he said, cheerily, “some happy fellow, I presume, has *veni, vidi, vici’d* it. Lucky dog—luckier than Miss Floretta, here.”

Marian’s eyes flashed angrily, but Mrs. Gregson, having no reason to be disturbed, continued coolly: “O no, not a sweetheart, sir; if that’s what you call being ‘vidivicied.’ O dear, no—it’s her guardian to which I referred, Mr. Warner.”

Elliott had moved towards the door, being anxious to spare Miss Mayley, but Elmsley was

less considerate, and noway inclined to evacuate his position.

"Mr. Warner?" he asked—"Mr. Warner! I once served with a fine fellow, named Warner. I wonder if it is the same."

"I don't know," replied Mrs. Gregson; "but you might have served with him. Pray, what was your line of business?"

Marian uttered a little cry, which both the gentlemen were too considerate to notice, and Elmsley bowing, said:—

"I was not so fortunate as to be brought up to commerce. I was in the army."

"Oh," said Mrs. Gregson, not in the least disconcerted, "I remember now.

'Who'll serve the King?' cries the sergeant aloud.'

Deputy Baffer used to sing a song about it. No, sir; you could not have known Mr. Warner in that capacity"—and a knock at the door led her to add—"but you can now make his acquaintance, as that's him, I should not wonder."

An introduction to a male guardian was more

than either the conspirators had bargained for; but Elliott was quite prepared for any emergency likely to arise from contact with such a formidable personage as a guardian of real life.

"You have company, ladies," said Mr. Warner, bowing.

"Yes, Mr. Warner," answered Mrs. Gregson, whilst Marian blushed deeply and looked at the carpet. "These gentlemen have kindly brought back our Floretta, who, naughty little dog, ran out of the house this morning in search of its mistress."

Elliott waited calmly to ascertain what Mr. Warner might have to say, and resolved to shape his own course accordingly. Not so Elmsley, who, presenting his card—a ceremony neither had thought necessary, or remembered to be so until the present moment—said:—

"I shall always feel grateful to the little wanderer, since she has introduced me to—Mr. Warner."

Warner bowed very stiffly, and having read the name on the card—there was no address—looked

Elmsley hard in the face, and repeated his name very slowly.

"Do you know the Captain?" asked Mrs. Gregson, with an expression of pleasure.

"I remember the name, I fancy," replied Warner, placing the card in his waistcoat pocket.

"He recognised yours the moment I mentioned it," said Mrs. Gregson, "and thought you had served together under the banner of His late Gracious Majesty?"

"Hem!"

Warner gave a short cough, and then added:—

"You have thanked these gentlemen, I presume, for their politeness, and therefore, Captain Elmsley, and you, sir, will not think me rude"—he rang the bell—"in wishing you a good day, as I have business with these ladies."

The situation was embarrassing enough, but the footboy having been listening on the landing outside the drawing-room door, their probation was a very short one. They, therefore, would have bowed their *adieux* and departed, but Mrs. Gregson insisted upon shaking hands with both,

to the annoyance and amusement of Marian and Mr. Warner. Was Elliott deceived, or did those lustrous eyes glance upon him once, and for a moment only, as he left the room?

"Have you met those people before?" asked Warner.

"This morning, in the Park," replied Mrs. Gregson; "but Marian wouldn't let me notice them. I've no doubt they thought us rude, as the young gentleman gave us up his coach one night at the play."

"Do you know that one of them is little better than a swindler, and has been so for years?"

"Oh, you must be mistaken, sir," said Marian, colouring deeply.

"In Captain Elmsley?" asked Warner. "No, no; such men are not to be mistaken or forgotten."

"But the other, sir," said Marian, hesitating before she added—"I have some reason to believe—is a nobleman."

"Who told you that, my dear?" asked Warner, and before Marian could have replied, had she

been inclined to have done so, Digby entered the room, and Warner made a bold guess, saying:—

“So, Mrs. Digby, you have been in league with the persons who have just left the house?”

The go-between, with all her tact and coolness, was taken aback by this sudden accusation, and became so confused, that Warner waited for no further confirmation of his suspicion, but requested her to leave the room at once, and the house to-morrow morning. Digby soon recovered her self-possession, and was not one to retire without firing a shot.

“Well, sir,” she said. “I don’t care a great deal about the place. Miss Mayley is certain to be married in six months, and then the lady’s-maid would degenerate into a servant, and that wouldn’t suit me.”

The noise she made in shutting the door set Floretta barking, and her poor young mistress was grateful for the temporary diversion.

“My dear Mr. Warner, what an escape we seem to have had! Do you really think that nice

military gentleman is a what's-a-name?" asked Mrs. Gregson.

"And the other no lord! Yes, my dear Miss Mayley," Warner added, taking Marian's hand, and looking at her sadly and kindly. "Wealth and beauty are dangerous possessions—they have ruined the happiness of many a heart. You have both, my dear; let this morning's adventure be remembered."

The young maiden's face reddened, as though she rebelled at this unaccustomed schooling.

"It is a father that speaks to you, dear Marian,—one whose own heart is bleeding at this moment from a wound inflicted by a daughter's thoughtless act, and who has no other desire than to clasp her to his bosom and forgive her."

Marian had kept her eyes fixed upon him as he spoke, and when he had ended she rose and kissed his forehead. Nothing more was said, no more words were needed, and Warner left the room, to return at dinner-time with a pleasant face and a cheerful voice, as though to assure his pretty ward

that he was not always disposed to play the schoolmaster.

The next morning, when Warner arrived at the office of his agent in the City, he found there Lucy and Jack Spraggatt. With tearful eyes and a smiling face she met him as he entered, and having said, with a choking voice, "All is well, dear love," laid her head upon his bosom, incapable of further utterance. Jack Spraggatt—who, unfortunately for himself, inherited "much of his mother's weakness"—dared not trust himself to speak, but proceeded to open his large black pocket-book, and then produced from it the certificate of the marriage of Florence Warner to Edward Norwold, and which he read aloud as distinctly as he was able, merely adding: "her cousin—your brother Gilbert's son."

Warner's face became pallid at the announcement, and he would have fallen had not Lucy placed a chair for him, and Jack blamed himself for his indiscretion in making him acquainted so abruptly with the knowledge they had obtained,

and he was only relieved when Warner had asked him for the paper.

Warner read it over twice, as though he doubted the correctness of what his eyes assured him was there written. When he had satisfied himself that he comprehended the meaning of the words, he said, in a low voice, "Mysterious Providence! Is it decreed that the vow I made, in the agony of my affliction, should have been fulfilled in vain!"

"Even so, dear husband!" and Lucy knelt down by his side, and took his hands between her own. "Nor must we regret that it has been so! Our sorrows are not to be cast from us impatiently or absolutely, for no grief, however great, is sent to us without its purpose. Endurance, humbleness, and sympathy for all mankind, are what we are taught by sorrow. You—and we who have shared your life—resented the affliction which came upon you, and said: 'This shall not be borne, but as we choose to bear it.' And so we have lived and planned and determined until two have been joined together,

and by that union we are compelled into submission and obedience, but by a hand of gentleness and mercy."

"You are reproaching me, Lucy," said Warner; "and yet when I have sometimes wavered in the course I was pursuing, you have always urged me to continue in it."

"Do not think my words reproaches, dear George," Lucy replied. "You will not do so when you have recalled them. Nor do I wish or counsel you to abandon the name you have made so honourable, through the many happy years we have passed together. No. I would have you see, dear husband, that no common chance has restored your child to her just inheritance, although we had reared her in the lonely Bush, and placed the ocean between her and the home of her forefathers."

"And would you have me forgive all that has passed, and take her, and the son of my bitter, unrelenting enemy to my heart, Lucy?"

"I would! I would!"

"O Lucy, can you doubt it?"

They embraced each other for some time, whilst Jack Spraggatt was snuffing and blowing his nose violently at intervals, at one of the windows which looked out upon that most depressing spectacle in London—a City churchyard.

We know how Lucy and Jack had journeyed about, until they had come to a check in the little chapel in the Avenue Marbeuf, and why no letter had reached Florence. Jack advised that the next call should be made at Sir Gilbert's house, as it was nearly certain that the whereabouts of Mr. Edward Norwold would be known there; and as Warner considered it to be his duty now to pursue the inquiry, he dismissed his wife and brother-in-law to their hotel, and proceeded to Gilbert's residence in St. James's Square, almost unconscious of all around him from the tumult of conflicting feelings by which he was agitated.

The lamp in Mr. Vincent Elliott's chambers, in Pump Court, Temple, had been noticed burning late into the preceding night, and the shadow of that gentleman parading the room had led

his opposite neighbour to fancy that he was training for a walking match, so rapidly and continuously was it observed to appear and vanish. Elliott was, in truth, utterly dissatisfied with the past day's proceedings; he could not rest in his easiest chair, and a retirement to bed was ridiculous. He had been a party to a shabby deception, which, now that he was alone, neither his love, or whatever his feeling was for Miss Mayley, nor the excitement produced by Paravini's obfuscating liquids, could justify. No—he had done an ungentlemanly act, and Miss Mayley and the turbaned lady, and Mr. Warner, had doubtlessly come to the same conclusion, hours ago. What a horrible thought? and one for which neither brandy and soda, nor cigars, were palliatives.

Walking! perpetual walking, was his only relief, and so, like Douglas Jerrold's "Jack Halcyon," who declares, "Let a man have any trouble he will, and he has only to walk—walk—walk, to get rid of it"—he kept striding about his chamber until the person in the rooms under

him protested by vigorously thumping against the ceiling with a poker.

Elliott was too much of a gentleman to continue an annoyance, and, therefore, as St. Clement's clock struck four, he rolled on to his bed, and nearly strangled himself in his sheets during the first restless doze which exhausted nature perpetrated.

In the morning, after a most unsatisfactory breakfast, and several futile attempts to read the newspaper, he came to the conclusion that the proper thing to be done, was to make a call in Suffolk Street, and apologise to Mr. Warner, and through him to the ladies. He arrived too late, as Mr. Warner had left for the City, and thither Elliott went, having been furnished with his direction by Jacob the footboy. He had scarcely turned out of Suffolk Street, when he saw the very man he was in search of approaching at a quick pace, and evidently much disturbed by his thoughts.

"Why, here comes Warner," thought Elliott, "and not in the best of humours, I fancy.

Something's 'up' in the market which he hasn't got—or something is 'down' that he has! I don't care. I shall stop him. Good morning, Mr. Warner."

"Good morning, sir!" replied Warner, continuing his course, not regarding, even if he had recognised, Elliott.

"I beg pardon for detaining you"—which he did not, as Warner walked on. "I wish to say a word or two in explanation of what occurred yesterday. I was then an intruder in your house, sir!"

"Oh! I remember you," said Warner, still walking forward—"A bold venture, sir! but the prize was worth trying for."

"Oh! hang the money, sir;" answered Elliott, "it was not that which induced my impertinence."

"Pardon me," replied Warner, "if I am incredulous."

"You are quite right to be so," said Elliott. "I am, now, utterly surprised at my own conduct, I assure you. It was shabby, as well as grossly impertinent."

"You are a specious fellow," observed Warner, pausing for a moment, and looking Elliott full in the face; but that gentleman did not avoid the scrutiny, and replied—

"I am an honest fellow, if you'll only take the trouble to inquire."

"I am afraid I cannot spare the time, my lord," said Warner, with a sneer.

"Lord!" cried Elliott. "I am no lord. There's my card, sir. Vincent Elliott, Pump Court, Temple. I am a barrister."

"Then why allow your friend to represent you other than you are?" asked Warner, sternly.

"What, Elmsley! That fellow's cleverness has ruined everything," said Elliott.

"Your special pleading won't avail with me," said Warner, coolly. "I know you, sir, I fancy."

"If you do, sir," replied Elliott, his anger making him rather emphatic,—"if you do, you must be aware that I am incapable of the dissimulation with which you charge me."

Warner stopped, and after a pause, said :

“And Captain Elmsley?”

“I knew how it would be,” cried Elliott. “I knew I should suffer from my connection with that enigma. I picked him up at The Cock, in Fleet Street, and, like the old man of the mountain, he has stuck to me ever since. You misunderstand my character.”

“No, I don’t,” said Warner, very coolly.

“Yes, you do,” replied Elliott. “You think me a fortune-hunter—a swindler—a sneak; but you shall make inquiries. I insist upon it. There’s my card.”

“At present,” answered Warner, “I have more important business on hand.”

“Than repairing an injury done to a gentleman, and an honest man?” said Elliott, almost confronting Warner, who again regarded the barrister with a stern, fixed look, saying:

“You seem in earnest, sir?”

“I should think so,” replied Elliott. “I have acknowledged that I have been guilty of a great rudeness—perhaps something worse, and I am anxious to apologise. You think me a rogue,

and I must ask you to disabuse yourself of that impression."

"Well, sir," said Warner, taking the card, "I will make some inquiries."

"I thank you," replied Elliott; "and I will call to-morrow in Suffolk Street for my character, if you will kindly name an hour."

"If you please," said Warner, almost mechanically, as they had now arrived at the house of Sir Gilbert Norwold, and the thoughts of one were busy on another theme.

Elliott was surprised at the suddenness with which their conversation had been brought to a close, and more so when he saw Warner ring the servant's bell of the house before which they had stopped, and not make use of the knocker.

No less a personage than Mr. Gregory opened the door in full livery, his head plastered and powdered *secundum artem*, whilst his breast was decorated with a shirt-frill not unlike the fin of a stage demon.

"I wish to speak to Mr. Edward Norwold," said Warner, mildly.

"He doesn't abode here," replied Mr. Gregory. "We know nothing of him, and it is not likely. Sir Gilbert has cut him off, I believe. However, we know nothing of him," and Mr. Gregory slammed the door rather unceremoniously.

Warner, in his consternation at this intelligence, beat upon the door with his closed hand, and cried, "Open the door! tell me where my child has gone!"

Gregory unfastened a little window beside the hall door, through which letters and small parcels were received, and said loudly, "If you don't go away, I'll call the police!"

The window was again closed, but Warner called out—"Here, young man; here is money for you—only tell me the address of Mr. Norwold."

Elliott was moved by Warner's evident distress and excited manner, and found himself irresistibly compelled to interfere.

"You want some further information," he said; "we'll have it!" and then applied himself with considerable power to the knocker.

"Hallo, you sir!" said Gregory, opening the

door—"are you aware that that knocker makes a deuce of a row inside the house?"

"Yes," said Elliott, seizing him by the collar, and pulling him out on the door-step. "Now, answer this gentleman."

"Leave go off my collar!" replied Gregory; "don't you see I am dressed to take up lunch!"

"Answer, sir! answer!" said Elliott, in his excitement shaking the well-powdered flunkey till a little white cloud hung over the empty head.

"Use no violence, I pray," said Warner. "Young man, here is a note for five pounds—take it, and tell me where I can find Mr. Norwold—my daughter is his wife."

"Ah! sir," said Gregory—"thank'ee, sir—I can understand what the feelings of a father is when he pays for them in this way—and so, sir, you must know there was a great blow-up about three months ago in our family, and Sir Gilbert turned his son and your daughter out of doors—bang!—without a day's warning."

"And they went!" said Warner, with great effort—"they went where?"

"Well, sir, as it was no business of mine in particular I didn't make no inquiries, specially as Mr. Norwold insulted me in the most grossest manner that one gentleman could do to another. However!"—looking in through the door—"here, Baxter. Did you hear where the coach was told to drive as took away Mr. Edward's things?"

"Well, I did hear certainly, but the circumstance is gone out of my mind," replied Mr. Gregory's second in command, and to whom he had appealed. "I knowed the coachman as drove 'em though, by sight. He used to live helper in our stables, and went by the name of Chelsea Bill."

"Well there, sir," said Gregory, "Chelsea Bill is all we know, and as I hear my child a-crying" (referring to a bell, which was ringing), "I wish you good-day, and thank'ee for me."

When the door closed, Warner stood gazing at it, as though he would read upon it the knowledge he so much desired.

"Pardon me, Mr. Warner," said Elliott, "if

I venture to press my services upon you, but I am sure the man he has mentioned—this Chelsea Bill—can be found; and, if so, the discovery will be easy enough. If not, an advertisement in the paper is almost certain to obtain the information you seek. Take my arm, sir. Pray don't despair! Keep up your spirits; and if we fail to-day, we'll move for a new trial to-morrow."

Warner grasped Elliott's hand warmly, and so Mr. Vincent appeared to be in a fair way of making himself useful and agreeable to the guardian of Marian Mayley, and of arriving at that very desirable state of affairs without fraud or conspiracy.

END OF VOL. II.

